THE RING MAGAZINE

CANELO VS SMITH PREVIEW

P.62

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

RING

MUHAMMAD ALI ★ POSTER INSIDE

"I DON'T FEEL IT AT ALL, THIS 60 STUFF, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS … IT MEANS I CAN'T COME BACK."

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No joke: Larry Holmes (left) and Sugar Ray Leonard are two of the greatest living fighters.

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GO TO: http://bit.do/ali-vs-lee

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Terence Crawford is the RING Fighter of the Month after dominating Viktor Postol.

The RING

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FOUNDER
Nathaniel Fleischer (1888-1972)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Michael Rosenthal

MANAGING EDITOR
Brian Harty

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Douglass Fischer

ART DIRECTOR
Lamar Clark

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
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CONTROLLER
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CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

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800-846-6438
thering@emailcustomerservice.com

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comeoutwriting@sepublications.com
or P.O. Box 251753,
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NEAR-IMPOSSIBLE TASK

I didn't know the question would be so divisive: Who was the greater fighter, Sugar Ray Leonard or Roberto Duran?

I must've asked 30 experts that question to help determine who would be No. 1 on our Top 10 list of greatest living fighters, a feature in this issue of the magazine inspired by the passing of Muhammad Ali (see Page 40).

And their answers settled nothing: Half said Leonard, half said Duran.

Those who selected Leonard pointed to his all-around ability, his quickness, his dynamic athleticism and his ability to win the big fights, including his victory over Duran in their "No Mas" rematch and upset of Marvin Hagler.

Those who leaned toward Duran cited his underappreciated skills and perhaps unmatched ferocity, his power, his incredible run in the lightweight division and victory over Leonard two weight classes heavier. He, they insisted, has the better resume.

That's what the editors wrestled with as we attempted to make what became a very tough decision.

In the end, we went with Leonard, our cover subject this month, for one primary reason: head-to-head results. In other words, we allowed the fighters to make our decision.

Duran won their first meeting when Leonard made the mistake of trying to slug with the Panamanian on June 20, 1980, in Montreal, the greatest victory in Duran's career. The fight was competitive but no one disputed the decision.

Leonard, armed with a better game plan in the rematch, so thoroughly outboxed Duran that he quit out of frustration the following Nov. 25 in New Orleans. This one was a rout.

And although no one puts too much stock in the rubber match, which took place when both were past their primes on Dec. 7, 1989, in Las Vegas, Leonard won a near-shutout decision.

Of course, Duran supporters will reject our reasoning. They will say (with some justification) that Duran didn't get enough credit for the first victory and was out of shape for the second. Leonard people will counter that their man made the necessary adjustments for the rematch.

The point here is that this discussion could continue ad nauseam and nothing would be resolved. And, in the end, no one would be wrong.

The editors guessed that the fighters themselves would be supportive no matter who landed on top of our list. Leonard and Duran are 60 and 65 now, respectively. They've grown close over the years, well aware that their legacies are tightly intertwined. They respect one another.

We speculated that No. 2 would offer heart-felt congratulations to No. 1 even though a good part of him would be certain he should be on top.

As colleague Doug Fischer put it, referring to this difficult decision: "We really can't go wrong either way." RING

TOP RANK
TR
TOP RANK
TELATE
TELATE
TELATE
TOP RANK

Everyone flipped over Vasyl Lomachenko's sterling performance against Roman Martinez in June.

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

MORE ON MUHAMMAD ALI

POIGNANT WORDS

In your March 2016 issue you reprinted a feature from your February 1975 issue, "Best I Faced" by Muhammad Ali. I cannot believe how poignant that feature was and ironically so sadly timely. The great man himself wrote in the last sentence of a superb article: "There will be more tough fights for me. But my toughest of all fights is still to come when I retire from boxing. That will be my continued fight to help my people." Goodness, to say that article left me feeling choked would be an understatement. Breathtaking. May God bless him, his family and friends.

Paul Boots Errock
Oldham, England

FOOL'S GOLD?

Only the ignorant call Muhammad Ali great. Neither courageous nor original, he feared the United States government less than the Nation of Islam, which ultimately pulled all his strings. He was gracious enough to accept Joe Frazier's money and then insult him after Joe had the audacity to kick his ass. If one needs to give Ali credit, then praise him for what he was good at: He fooled more people than the Kennedys or the Clintons.

John Slaughter
North Myrtle Beach, S.C.

NO DRAFT DODGER

In the September 2016 issue, letter writer Steve Vargo calls Muhammad Ali a draft dodger. No he wasn't. Ali refused the draft but he didn't dodge it. If the Supreme Court hadn't agreed (unanimously) with his stand, he was ready to go to jail for his beliefs. In 1964 I married my girlfriend, who had three children, because that many dependents would exempt me from the draft. I was the draft dodger, not Ali.

Leslie Gerber
Woodstock, N.Y.

DARING TO BE GREAT

Some may question the validity of a fight between the best middleweight, who doesn't simply defeat but also destroys his opponents, and the best natural welterweight. This is fair. What would be unfair is to question the sheer guts of the man who will venture up two weight classes to vie for a piece of the middleweight crown. To use a term conjured in our beloved sport's time-honored tradition, the welterweight challenger, Kell Brook, is "daring to be great." If following this bout the wrecking machine that is Gennady G. Golovkin unifies the middleweight crown, then we can only hope that he follows the path of the Sheffield pugilist in a quest for lucrative earnings and glory. These are the types of intriguing bouts that often end as many suspect (i.e., a good big man beats a good little man). However, there are times when logic is magically altered to provide us with a spectacle worth remembering. Let's just hope that regardless of the outcome these two engage in a bout worth watching.

Niku T'arhechu T'arhesi
Cheran, Michoacan, Mexico

NEW LIFE

Who would have thought a big-mouthed, giant Gypsy would breathe life into the heavyweight division? Love him or hate him, Tyson Fury has single-handedly revitalized the heavyweight division by ending the Klitschko era and doing it in a manner which didn't instill trust in a new era of dominance. Fury has seemed fallible himself with a knockdown against the much smaller Steve Cunningham and there are many players now in the division who pundits believe can dethrone the Gypsy King. Whether it is his compatriots, the colossus Anthony Joshua and two-time canceled dance partner David Haye, the up-and-coming Kiwi Joseph Parker or the Bronze Bomber from the other side of the pond, Deontay Wilder, boxing fans now are divided on who they believe is the best heavyweight in the world. Even if Klitschko is able to defeat Fury in the rematch, his reign did end and we now have contenders instead of hopes fighting for the throne.

Luke Kearny
Melbourne, Australia

JUMPING THE GUN

With no doubt, Gennady Golovkin has been a fierce and exciting fighter with legit power. My question would be: Against what caliber opponent? His wins against Curtis Stevens, Matthew Macklin and Martin Murray should have been warmups for bigger fights with a hungry middleweight, let's say, Daniel Jacobs, Peter Quillin, Billy Joe Saunders or Chris Eubank Jr. Seeing that he ducked a fight with Andre Ward at 168 pounds, I feel his status as a "champion" and also his rank on the P4P list is suspect at this point. I feel GGG has the talent, but until he takes a fight that shows gumption he is merely hype at its best.

R. Bryant
San Quentin, Calif.

WON'T HAPPEN

Five fights that should happen but won't until one side has lost and lost badly: Danny Garcia vs. Keith Thurman, Anthony Crolla vs. Terry Flanagan, Scott Quigg vs. Carl Frampton II, Sergey Kovalev vs. Adonis Stevenson and Kell Brook vs. Errol Spence.

Dave Warner
United Kingdom

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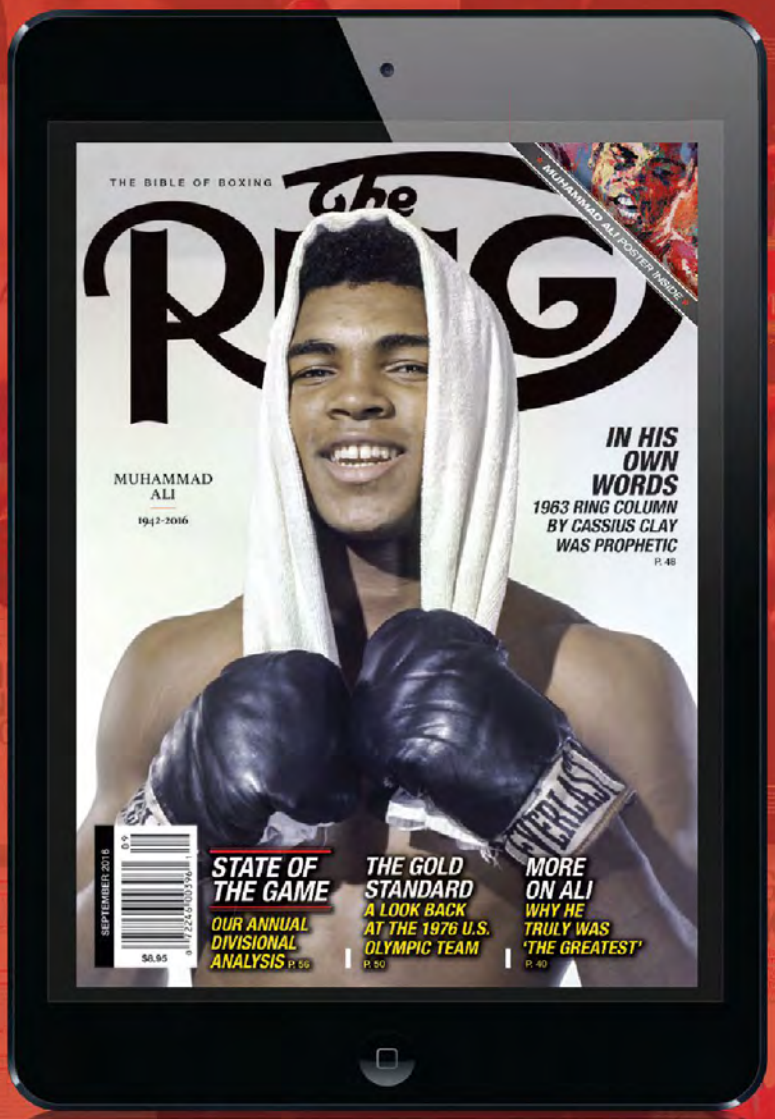

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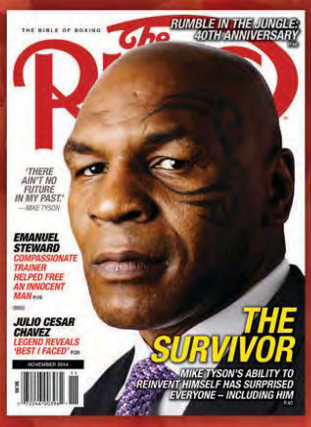

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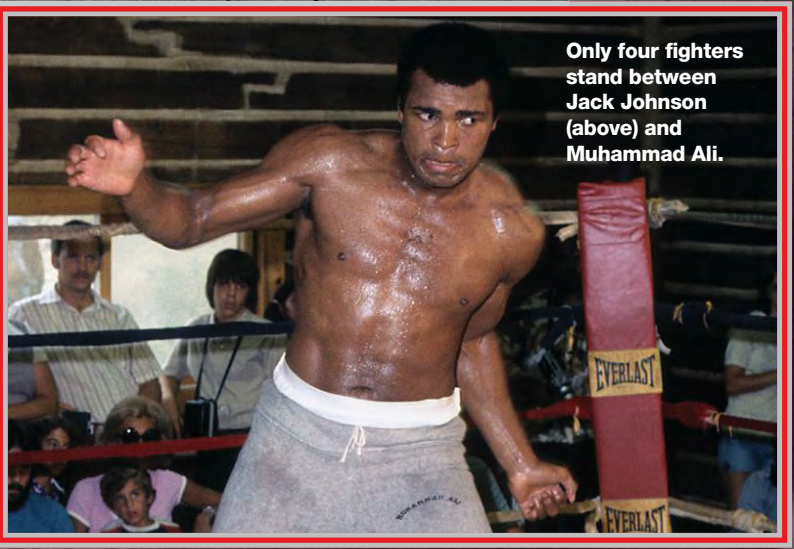
ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, regular contributor Gregg Morgan managed to link Jack Johnson (who turned pro in the 19th century) to the late Muhammad Ali in only five steps. Here's a look.

Jack Johnson fought
Bearcat Wright, who fought
Tiger Jack Fox, who fought
Ted Lowry, who fought
Archie Moore, who fought
Muhammad Ali »



Only four fighters stand between Jack Johnson (above) and Muhammad Ali.

10 A MONTHLY BOXING LIST

Kell Brook didn't have it easy.

This month: One problem with having around 70 sanctioning body titleholders is that many of them win their belts by beating opponents who aren't championship caliber. Some have had to take down elite foes to claim their belts, though. These 10 are prime examples.

« KELL BROOK: Traveled to Los Angeles to take Shawn Porter's IBF welterweight title.

JOHNRIEL CASIMERO: Put Amnat Ruenroeng away in four to win the IBF flyweight belt.

TERENCE CRAWFORD: Defeated Viktor Postol to unify two junior welterweight titles.

JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA: Unified two flyweight titles by outpointing veteran Brian Viloria.

TYSON FURY: Did the impossible, winning three belts by beating Wladimir Klitschko.

KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI: Rallied to stop Marco Huck and win the WBO cruiserweight title.

NAOYA INOUE: Stopped Omar Narvaez to win the WBO junior bantamweight belt.

SERGEY KOVALEV: Unified three light heavyweight titles by shutting out Bernard Hopkins.

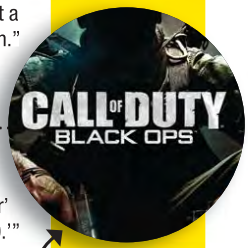
GARY RUSSELL JR.: KO'd the powerful Jhonny Gonzalez to win the WBC featherweight belt.

ADONIS STEVENSON: Stopped Chad Dawson in Round 1 to win the WBC 175-pound belt.

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

1. JEZREEL CORRALES JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER / **2. NICHOLAS WALTERS** JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT CONTENDER / **3. ANSELMO MORENO** BANTAMWEIGHT CONTENDER

FIGHTER	MUSIC	CAR	FOOD	TATTOOS	ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING	MOVIE	VIDEO GAME
1.	"Reggae."	"I prefer simple, not fancy cars."	"I like pasta."	"I have seven different tattoos. None of them have a special meaning."	"Soccer players: **Diego Maradona** and the Dely Valdes brothers from Panama."	"I am not a movie fan."	"I don't play video games."  **"'Call of Duty: Black Ops.'"**
2.	"I'm a lover of music: reggae, dancehall and roots reggae."	"I drive a Honda CR-V. My dream car is maybe a **Ferrari**."	"Chicken, rice and peas, stew peas."	"I have five: Chucky, he's a scary guy; a beautiful girl; God of War – I fight like God of War; a dragon and gorrilla."	"Usain Bolt."	"'The Godfather' and '300.'"	
3.	"Reggae."	"I drive a BMW. My dream car is a Lamborghini."	**"Rice with chicken."**	"More than 12 tattoos – every one has a meaning."	"Usain Bolt."	"Romantic movies, 'Diary of a Passion.'"	"Football games on the Playstation."

— **Anson Wainwright**

BROOK PHOTO COURTESY OF K2 PROMOTIONS

THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH By **Michael Rosenthal**

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

GOOD

One gratifying result of Terence Crawford's impressive unanimous-decision victory over Viktor Postol on July 23 was that THE RING was able to fill a championship vacancy, which unfortunately is rare these days. We still have only five champions in the 17 weight divisions at the moment. Remember: As per our recently revised championship policy, only a matchup of No. 1 vs. No. 2 (and sometimes No. 1 vs. No. 3) can fill a vacancy. Hence the scarcity of champions. Things continue to look up, though. Two more vacancies are scheduled to be filled in September, when No. 1 bantamweight Shinsuke Yamanaka takes on No. 2 Anselmo Moreno (Sept. 16) and No. 1 lightweight Jorge Linares faces No. 3 Anthony Crolla (Sept. 24). That's a veritable windfall for us in an era when the best actually fight the best so infrequently. We can only hope that this trend continues as we will still have 10 vacancies. Is it too much to ask that the proud fighter sitting at No. 1 points to the fighter at No. 2 and says, "Get me that guy?" Isn't that the way it's supposed to be?

BAD

The research I did to compile the "10" list in this issue – fighters who had to beat top-tier opponents to win their sanctioning-body belts (see Page 12) – revealed something disturbing. I discovered that at least two thirds of the 68-plus alphabet "champions" won their titles against opponents who had no business in title fights. One of the most recent examples was Oscar Valdez's spectacular knockout of Matias Rueda to win the vacant WBO featherweight title in July. Matias Rueda? The obscure Argentine was unbeaten but had never faced a recognizable opponent in his entire career. Valdez deserves credit for a spectacular victory and seems to have star power but that matchup was more a coronation than a competitive sporting event. And, very sadly, that's just one of many such examples. No one should be surprised given that the sanctioning bodies compile their ratings more on what is somehow advantageous to them than merit. That's how a fighter like Rueda ends up in a "championship" fight and why alphabet titles too often have so little meaning. The sanctioning bodies must do better.

WORSE

I understand why Manny Pacquiao and his handlers want to be careful in choosing his next opponent. He'll be 38 in December. And if any fighter has earned the right to go out as he pleases, it's him. That said, it was disconcerting at our press time that his handlers seemed to shy away from the idea of Pacquiao fighting Terence Crawford. Again, I get it. Pacquiao is not the dynamo he once was and Crawford displayed blinding speed against Viktor Postol, who is trained by longtime Pacquiao mentor Freddie Roach. Since when did Pacquiao avoid a challenge, though? One reason he became an icon is that he fought one top-tier opponent after another. And it's not as if Pacquiao would have no chance against Crawford. He demonstrated against Tim Bradley in April that he retains much of his ability and quickness. And he would have his own advantages, including experience and size. I would expect Pacquiao to go out against the best possible opponent for him, which would seal his legacy as a true warrior. If his next (final?) opponent is a handpicked patsy, he'll be sending a disappointing message.

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

Terence Crawford's impressive victory over Viktor Postol on July 23 raised the possibility of an interesting matchup. With that in mind, we asked: **What would be the result of a fight between Terence Crawford and Manny Pacquiao?** Here is how you responded.

THE PERCENTAGES

24.95 PACQUIAO BY CLOSE DECISION

21.69 CRAWFORD BY CLOSE DECISION

16.59 PACQUIAO BY KO

13.00 PACQUIAO BY WIDE DECISION

12.28 CRAWFORD BY WIDE DECISION

10.45 CRAWFORD BY KO

1.04 DRAW

NOTE: 1,531 READERS VOTED

Ray Mancini (left) had difficultly penetrating Livingstone Bramble's defense.

RAY MANCINI

29-5 (23 KOs)

The all-action style of Ray Mancini in the early 1980s helped make him a household name.

Mancini, from the blue-collar Youngstown, Ohio, area, wasn't the most skilled practitioner around but he more than made up for that with his come-forward aggression and considerable heart against some of the best lightweights in the world at the time.

"Boom Boom" turned professional

in late 1979, winning his first 20 bouts before unsuccessfully challenging the late, great Alexis Arguello in a WBC 135-pound title fight. He bounced back to win the WBA title seven months later, stopping Arturo Frias.

"Winning the world title is the greatest moment of my life," Mancini told THE RING Magazine. "I then defended my title for the first time back in my hometown of Warren, Ohio, which is right next to Youngstown, in front of 20,000 people in a high school football stadium.

"The reason that was so important is Youngstown/Warren had 28 percent unemployment and we filled the stadium because the town needed something to hold on to and I was that guy. I've always said my city has had a large part of my success and I really mean that. They supported me, followed me wherever I fought."

Mancini had a close relationship with his father, Lenny, a former title contender who was never the same after he was wounded fighting in World War II. In a way, the younger Mancini lived his father's dream.

"My father was my hero; he was everything I wanted to be as a man and as a fighter," he said.

In his second title defense, Mancini stopped Duk-Koo Kim in the penultimate round of a brutal war. Tragically Kim died from his injuries four days later.

Mancini made two more successful defenses before losing his belt to Livingstone Bramble, who was behind on two of the three cards when he stopped Mancini in the 14th round. Bramble outpointed Mancini in a rematch eight months later.

Mancini (29-5, 23 knockouts) made two comebacks – losing to Hector Camacho in 1989 and Greg Haugen in 1992 – before retiring for good. He entered the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2015.

Now 55, Mancini lives in Los Angeles and has several businesses, including a company that produces films and a winery. He remarried in 2014.

"I have three children from a previous marriage," he said. "She has three from her previous marriage. Together we're the Brady Bunch. I'm enjoying life."

He graciously agreed to speak with THE RING about the best he faced in 10 key categories.

BEST JAB

Alexis Arguello: When I got hit by that jab my body shook because it was like a ramrod. It wasn't like a typical jab. A lot of guys throw it out there to find their distance. … When he threw a jab it was to hurt you and it did.

BEST CHIN

Jose Luis Ramirez: Ramirez had a great chin. I don't think anybody knocked him out. I hit him with some good shots. He backs up a little bit and he keeps coming. I beat him by boxing him. Alexis had a great chin but so did Ramirez.

BEST PUNCHER

Arguello: He was one of the great punchers of all time. … He had a great knockout ratio from featherweight all the way to junior welterweight. He was 135 pounds of all muscle and he put everything behind it.

FASTEST HANDS

Hector Camacho: Camacho had the best hand speed I ever fought. That was part of his success, speed. I knew what I was up against and I prepared for it. With a guy like Camacho, when he throws punches, you've got to throw punches right back to break him up.

FASTEST FEET

Camacho: He was in and out. You had to try to corner him, get him to the ropes. He was always slipping and sliding.

SMARTEST

Arguello: I would say Camacho and Arguello. Camacho because of the way he moved, used his skillset, his speed and reflexes. He didn't care about tying you up and getting booed, he was gonna do whatever to survive. He was smart in that respect. Alexis was a guy who set traps early in a fight and then he went back later in the fight to get those traps caught. The difference is if you fall into a trap, Alexis could hurt you – hurt you bad. Camacho, no.

STRONGEST

Arguello: Alexis was like a bar of iron, physically strong, but so was Bramble. (Arguello) was tall, lean and wiry. They didn't push me back but I wasn't able to push them back. I would say both were strong but I'd say Alexis.

BEST DEFENSE

Livingstone Bramble: Styles make fights and one of the most difficult styles for me was Livingstone Bramble. He had long arms and he crossed his body. He put his arms up and wore them like ear muffs. His elbows dropped down past his body, so banging him with a body shot or clean shot was very difficult.

BEST SKILLS

Arguello: It's gonna be without a doubt Alexis Arguello. He was one of the greatest fighters of all time. … He was just a special type of fighter, though when you watched him, he wasn't exceptionally quick, he wasn't exceptionally mobile or fast or what you thought, but what he had was exceptional discipline. He'd create distance, just enough where he could hit you and you couldn't hit him. He used his height and reach to his advantage. He used it better than anyone I've known.

BEST OVERALL

Arguello: Without a doubt. He was a special fighter.

Anson Wainwright can be reached at elraincoat@live.co.uk. Follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

By **David Greisman**

ANOTHER MISMATCH

GENNADY GOLOVKIN VS. **KELL BROOK** IS ANOTHER FIGHT WE DON'T WANT INSTEAD OF THE ONE WE DO

Kell Brook (left) deserves credit for taking on a huge challenge but he is still a welterweight challenging a middleweight.

If you can't beat them, join them. So goes the cliche. So goes reality.

Gennady Golovkin could beat Canelo Alvarez if only he could get Alvarez in the ring with him. He can't, at least not until late 2017 at the earliest. So instead of beating Canelo, Golovkin is following in his footsteps by taking a surprising bout against a British welterweight.

Golovkin's trip to London to take on Kell Brook on Sept. 10 is the fight that no one called for except for Brook himself. Brook has spoken since earlier this year of wanting to take on the fighter that seemingly no one else wants to face. But unlike others who only say they're willing to take on GGG, he's actually moving up to challenge the best middleweight in the world and one of the best boxers around.

Brook's balls are so big that it makes you wonder how he'll lug them around the ring if he is to move as much as he must in order to win. It also makes you question why too few have the courage that Brook does. Brook might say it's courage backed by confidence. Others might call it craziness. It isn't just balls that Brook has. He's nuts to even attempt this.

No one else wanted this because everyone else hoped Golovkin could take on the rest of the best middleweights, or perhaps even the top junior middleweights – and if nothing else were possible, a move up to challenge the super middleweights.

In a way, this is worse than Canelo facing Amir Khan. While Canelo is the RING champion at middleweight, he was still a 155-pound fighter defending against a foe who was moving up from 147. Golovkin is a 160-pounder facing an opponent two divisions smaller.

In another way, Canelo-Khan still was less palatable. Khan wasn't at the top of the welterweight heap, as Brook is. He'd only beaten Luis Collazo, Devon Alexander and Chris Algieri. His questionable chin was a liability against fighters his own size. It never stood a chance of standing up to Canelo's shots.

Kell Brook has steadied himself and succeeded since his shaky win over Carson Jones in 2012. Now he's rated No. 1 by THE RING. That status, however, is still largely based on his decision victory against Shawn Porter two years ago. He could've solidified his place by facing any of the many name welterweights – including a unification bout with Jessie Vargas, with whom he was negotiating – but it didn't happen.

It's not quite a no-lose scenario for Brook, though. A loss is still a loss. This loss could hurt more physically than it would hurt his place in the sport. He's a welterweight making a brave stand. That brave stand could make him a changed man, for better or for worse. He might not be able to just return to 147. He may have to recover first.

But matches like this are made because they make more money and headlines than matches that make more sense. People watched Canelo-Khan for the same reason they tuned in to see Nik Wallenda walk a tightrope across the Grand Canyon. It would be amazing to see him succeed and horrifying if he failed. Except Wallenda is trained to keep his balance on thin ropes. Khan was on thin ice. There was little question that it would crack once he got cracked, and then he'd be down cold. It was a circus and those who parted with their money to watch it were the clowns.

The pay-per-view and ticket sales are why Canelo chose Khan over other available junior middleweights. Golovkin was left with little choice but to make this choice, thanks in large part to the choices of others.

Canelo-Khan was supposed to be an appetizer, with Khan eaten alive before Alvarez went on to the main course with Golovkin. Instead, Canelo served up something that was hard to swallow. There was no deal, just an agreement that the fight wouldn't happen until late next year, allowing time for the fight to build up more, as well as time for the fighter to build himself up to 160.

Except Canelo then announced he was going to drop in weight slightly — from a little above the junior middleweight limit, which he's been ever since after his loss to Floyd Mayweather Jr. — down to 154 to challenge Liam Smith, who is the weakest of the four titleholders in that division and who is ranked lower than a few who don't have belts.

It's possible that Alvarez will face middleweight titleholder Billy Joe Saunders afterward, perhaps in December. That at least – and at last – would be an admirable move in the right direction.

Golovkin couldn't reach a deal to defend against Saunders and potentially pick up the fourth sanctioning body belt. Golovkin's promoter says Al Haymon never returned his calls about a bout with Danny Jacobs. So Golovkin's team looked at another U.K.-based fighter, Chris Eubank Jr., whose demands outraged even his own promoter, Eddie Hearn. Golovkin and Hearn had a date at London's O2 Arena, on British pay-per-view and on an HBO broadcast in the United States.

With little time left, Golovkin's team opted against trying to negotiate with other options at 160 or 154. And there was no need to have him move up one division when they could have Brook move up two. It took little time for Brook to take the same money being offered to Eubank for a fight that will be even more difficult for him.

You can give Brook credit. You can give Canelo, Eubank and Saunders the blame, and perhaps give Golovkin some understanding. None of that will change the fact that we're getting another mismatch instead of a can't-miss match. RING

TOP: AP; BOTTOM: LAWRENCE LUSTIG

Steve Albert: From Boxing To Hoops

Steve Albert

Steve Albert is best known to boxing fans for having been the voice of Showtime Championship Boxing for two decades. But his interests extend far beyond the sweet science. He's a sports junkie.

If there's a ball, puck or net, Steve will be there. I can attest to that through firsthand knowledge. I was an undergraduate at Columbia, which has lost more football games than any college program in history except VMI. Once a year, as an exercise in masochism, I go to a Columbia football game. Several years ago, I asked Steve if he wanted to join me.

"Oh, boy! Wow! Columbia football! That would be fantastic!"

OK. So I'm exaggerating a bit. But Steve did come to the game. And he brought brother Al with him, which shows that insanity runs in the family.

"Marv would have come too," Steve said apologetically. "But he's calling a basketball game tonight."

In July 2012, Steve signed a five-year contract to serve as the play-by-play TV announcer for the NBA Phoenix Suns. His basketball roots run deep. In high school, he was a ball boy for the New York Knicks. Over the years, he has been the lead television play-by-play announcer for the Nets, Warriors and Pelicans.

"It was easier to call NBA games 30 years ago than it is now," Steve said recently. "The game was slower back then. As good as television is, it doesn't really show viewers how fast these guys are. The way they move, the bullet passes. It's also a much more physical game now. These guys are so big and powerful. It's uncanny how they move with so much finesse."

Have any fights broken out in games that Steve has called for the Suns?

"Not yet," he answered. "But I think I can handle it if one does."

He paused for effect.

"No ears have been bitten either."

Phoenix missed the playoffs this season for the sixth year in a row, finishing 18 games out of a playoff spot with 23 wins and 59 losses. Meanwhile, the Golden State Warriors rolled through the regular season, winning an NBA-record 73 games and cruising through the first two rounds of the playoffs.

Then Golden State hit a speed bump. The Oklahoma City Thunder, led by Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook, took a 3-1 series lead over the Warriors in the Western Conference finals. Golden State fought back, winning games five and six. That set the stage for a dramatic game seven.

I suggested to Steve that we watch the game together. At 9 o'clock eastern time, we were in my apartment awaiting the action.

"Years ago, I was close to some of the players," Steve reminisced. "Chris Mullin when I was with the Warriors; Buck Williams when I was with the Nets. I fraternize with the players less now than I did when I was young. Part of that is an age thing. And part of it is that they're all connected to their devices. On the plane, on the bus, they're always on the phone or listening to music or something else with a plug in their ear. They're cordial, but there's not a lot of conversation."

"The traveling is hard," Steve said, continuing his thoughts. "It's a real grind. And that's for me. You can imagine what it's like for the players. The injuries and the fatigue factor when you get to the playoffs are brutal."

Years ago, Al Bernstein (then Steve's TV partner at Showtime) told me, "I've worked with a lot of very good commentators but none of them prepared for a telecast as exhaustively as Steve. He researches, he studies, he has more notes at ringside than you can begin to imagine. He's the best-prepared commentator I've ever seen."

That work ethic continues to this day.

"Basketball is particularly demanding," Steve told me as the Warriors-Thunder pre-game commentary segued to a commercial. "You're talking about 82 games. So as soon as one game ends, I'm preparing for the next. I'm always watching NBA League Pass to scout out the next opponent. I probably watch more games than some coaches. I take notes. I organize them. I'm not just watching the players. I'm listening to the announcers for whatever insights they might have. I feel better going into a game when I'm prepared."

How far does that never-ending preparation extend?

Sitting on the sofa in my apartment, Steve had a yellow legal pad in front of him.

"I never know when I might see or hear something that helps my announcing in the future," he told me. "It could be an idea on how to improve my presentation, a piece of information I might use sometime, anything."

The final pre-game commercials ended.

"It's funny," Steve said. "After all these years of knowing each other, we've never seen a fight together. And we wind up watching a basketball game together on television."

The action began with brother Marv calling the play-by-play.

"What does it feel like, sitting here listening to Marv?" I asked.

"When I was a kid, it was a thrill. 'Hey, that's my brother!' I'm used to it now, but I always root for Marv while the game is going on. I feel good when he does a good job."

The Thunder jumped out to an 8-4 lead.

"OKC has come out more methodically than they did in game six," Steve said. "Let's see if they can keep it up. Once Curry hits a shot, the game will officially be on."

Curry hit a three-pointer.

"There it is."

And another.

"Curry is amazing. When he's on, he puts up shots and doesn't even look to see if they're going in."

Durant hit a three-point basket to put the Thunder ahead 14-10.

"The best shooters release the ball so fast. They don't even look at the rim."

The Thunder led 24-19 after one quarter and extended their lead to 29-19 as the second stanza began to unfold. Marv Albert informed viewers that Klay Thompson had missed his first six shots from the floor and the Warriors as a team were nine for 29.

"Sometimes, I'll watch a game like this and do play-by-play in my head," Steve said. "Marv and I think alike. I would have put that in there then too."

Oklahoma City 35, Golden State 22.

"The Warriors are making too many lazy passes," Steve said. "But this is a game of runs. They can tie it up in the blink of an eye with the three-ball."

OKC maintained its lead at 45-33.

"Golden State is better than this," Steve said.

Klay Thompson came alive, hitting a trio of three-point baskets.

"What a beautiful stroke. This could be a classic."

The Thunder took a 48-42 lead into the dressing room at halftime.

"I still think Golden State wins it," Steve said. "They're more experienced and mentally tougher than OKC. I have the feeling that, right now, there are players in the OKC dressing room who are waiting for the other shoe to drop. From a straight talent point of view, The Thunder might have the better players. But basketball is a game where the better team beats the better players. Golden State will go on another run and OKC will get demoralized."

Oklahoma City scored the first basket of the second half to go up 50-42.

Steve backtracked a bit. "This is not the well-oiled Golden State machine we're used to seeing. The Warriors have to get their act together."

Then it happened. Stephen Curry started raining threes.

"It's like boxing," Steve said. "The Warriors are into OKC's head now and are taking them out of their comfort zone."

The Warriors surged ahead 59-56.

"Right now," Steve said, "Stephen Curry looks like he's having a lot more fun than Russell Westbrook."

Shaun Livingston of the Warriors took a pass off a defensive rebound and slammed down an uncontested dunk on a transition play.

"(Oklahoma City coach) Billy Donovan's got to be pissed," Steve said.

A second later, Reggie Miller (Marv's broadcast partner) declared, "If you're Billy Donovan, you can't be happy with your transition defense."

Golden State led 71-60 after three quarters, having outscored Oklahoma City 29-to-12 in the third stanza.

"One of the great things about being Marv right now," Steve said, "is you know that everyone is watching and listening to you call this game. Not only is LeBron James watching; I'll bet Barack Obama is watching this game."

The Thunder went on a seven-point run, narrowing Golden State's lead to 73-69.

"It still feels as though Golden State is in the driver's seat," Steve said. "But maybe not. This is a great game."

The Warriors hung tough, expanding their lead to 88-77.

"I love the way Golden State plays the game. Look at the way they're setting things up. Three passes for the best shot on each possession. When OKC has the ball, Westbrook or Durant tries to do it by himself."

Ultimately, Golden State emerged triumphant 96-88 behind 36 points from Stephen Curry and 21 from Klay Thompson.

"What an amazing comeback," Steve said, putting his pen away and preparing to go home. "Down three games to one against an OKC team that was playing at its peak and beating the crap out of them. It will be a great story if the Warriors make it all the way but they have one more mountain to climb. Golden State against Cleveland will be great."

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – "A Hurting Sport: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing" – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

Peter Quillin (left) and Daniel Jacobs demonstrated confidence when they chose to fight one another.

A CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

FIGHTERS ARE ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHOM THEY CHOOSE TO FIGHT

Bernard Hopkins made sure he faced the best possible opponents.

This is one in a series of columns by future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, who gives us his thoughts on various subjects important to every boxer and fan. This issue: Fighters must instruct their handlers to get them the best possible opponents.

You hear it all of the time after a boxer wins a major fight and is then asked who he will fight next: "I'm going to wait and see what my management team wants to do."

Don't believe it.

Any name fighter has control over who they fight. I did. I wanted to fight the best – and I still do. Some guys avoid that and they shouldn't. It's hurting the sport.

I'll tell you someone I like a lot, Terence Crawford. He fights the best. Danny Jacobs stepped up and fought Peter Quillin. That's the key. It's what's going to help boxing survive. And the sport needs all of the help that it can get.

The top four fighters in each division need to make the top fights happen. Here's what I'm proposing: The top four fighters in each class have a box-off among themselves, like I did in 2001 with Felix Trinidad, Keith Holmes and William Joppy. We were the best middleweights in the world and we all fought to make sure the boxing world knew who the best 160-pounder was.

Not everyone with a title is the best in their division. And the sanctioning bodies, who say all the time they want to do what's best for boxing, should be called out for their role in that. They should make more of an effort to unify titles. Unification creates credibility to mainstream media. They and the fans then know who to follow. When Marvin Hagler was the champion, Hagler was the champion. When Roberto Duran was the champion, Duran was the champion. There were no doubts.

Primary responsibility falls on the fighters, though.

They need to be held accountable. I would ask them: When it comes down to it, do you want be the best in the world or just one of the best? I always wanted to be the best. I still do. It comes down to the athlete. No one had to twist my arm to fight anyone. A lot of guys, and a lot of people, hide behind their representation. They need to be called out by other fighters to make major fights happen.

It's why I say it boils down to the fighters. If a fighter wants to fight, especially a major fighter who calls his own shots, they will fight. We're not holding guys accountable. You can't babysit a title. When you think you're the best and you want to be best, then you fight the best.

When the best don't fight the best, it's really a disservice to the athlete. It's taking away their confidence. When your cornermen and your representation don't think you can beat someone, that takes a bite out of your confidence. That's what these guys are doing to themselves today when they hide. They're killing their own confidence.

It has to stop.

NAOKI FUKADA; RIGHT: THE RING MAGAZINE

Israel Vazquez decided to have his damaged eye removed.

THE COST OF WAR

A stark reminder of the dangers of boxing were laid bare in the recent news that former junior featherweight champion Israel Vazquez will lose his right eye as a result of the rigors of his 15-year career.

His four fights with Rafael Marquez are among the great series of the sport, on par with Gatti-Ward and Morales-Barrera. They are also among the most brutal. In entertaining fans and winning THE RING's Fight of the Year in 2007 and 2008, Vazquez, who went 2-2 in the series, was venturing down a dark road that would eventually claim his eye.

Vazquez, now 38, needed three surgeries to repair a detached retina in his right eye following the third fight in March of 2008. Still, he was medically cleared and granted a license by the California State Athletic Commission to continue his career. The last fight was devoid of suspense. Marquez dropped Vazquez (44-5, 32 knockouts) and stopped him in three rounds in May 2010, sending him into retirement.

The Mexico City native said he had more than six operations on the eye in his career.

"The problem obviously arose after the last fight (with Marquez)," Vazquez told ESPN Deportes. "But I don't want to demonize the sport or the fight because this was an oversight by my physician and myself. When they started to perform the surgeries, I didn't take care of myself. They told me I was doing well and I tried to speed up the recovery but my retina detached. I underwent many surgeries and they tried many methods, one of which was to put silicone in the eye. I assumed the doctors knew what they were doing, and at that moment I didn't recover my vision a hundred percent but I could live my life."

The silicone reportedly had hardened in his right eye, making it difficult for him to see. When he was given the option of having the eye removed and a prosthesis inserted, he decided to pursue that course. A procedure to remove the eye had not yet been performed as of late July but he was intent on having it.

"Without being sarcastic, I prefer to look good with something that doesn't work than have something that does not work and does not make me see well," he said. "I know that psychologically it won't be easy (to have the eye removed) but it is something that I will need to get used to."

Floyd Mayweather Jr. found himself in an unfortunate position recently, telling TMZ that Gavin Long, the retired Marine who killed three police officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on July 17, is not a member of The Money Team even though Long can be seen displaying TMT gear, such as a hat, in videos he posted of himself online. "Gavin Long is not a member of TMT by any means," Mayweather's camp told TMZ. "Floyd doesn't want the TMT brand to be affiliated with the violent act Gavin has caused and neither Floyd nor anyone else from TMT knows him."

Adrien Broner was sentenced to 30 days in county jail for arriving around three hours late for a July 19 court hearing on charges of felonious assault and aggravated robbery stemming from a Jan. 21 incident outside a bowling alley. Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Robert Ruehlman decided that Broner was in contempt of court and issued a warrant for his arrest. "Somebody put something in my drink (the previous night)," Broner told the judge, trying to explain why he was late, according to the Cincinnati Enquirer. "I don't even drink. I didn't drink last night." The judge responded: "You don't look well. You look like you have a hangover."

Manny Pacquiao wants to fight again. This shouldn't come as a surprise since the Filipino icon said he was "50-50" about walking away from the sport after his impressive points victory over Timothy Bradley on April 9. But just as soon as the news surfaced that he was itching to get back into the ring, Pacquiao took to his Facebook page to denounce any media reports that said he was shirking his duties as a senator to fight again. Some construed this as saying he didn't want to return. What he was really saying is that he'll make his ring return only if it doesn't conflict with duties as a civic leader.

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Terence Crawford gave a virtuoso performance against Viktor Postol.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

TERENCE CRAWFORD

By **Michael Rosenthal**

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

The fight was supposed to be close. Viktor Postol, who was undefeated and had just beaten up Lucas Matthysse, was supposed to have the height and tools to give Terence Crawford all he could handle in their fight for the vacant RING junior welterweight title on July 23 in Las Vegas.

Crawford didn't cooperate.

In the end, a frustrated Postol had no idea how to cope with Crawford's confounding quickness and unusual ability. The Nebraskan darted in and out and all around, landing enough hard punches to win round after round and was barely touched himself in a virtuoso, Mayweather-like performance at the MGM Grand.

Crawford forced Postol to the canvas twice in Round 5 and Postol lost a point for punching behind the head in Round 11, which only made a wide disparity even wider: The judges had it 118-107 (10 rounds to 2), 118-107 and 117-108. I had it 117-108, which was generous to the loser.

And it should be noted that Crawford tried to do what Mayweather rarely did: As a nod to the fans, he attempted in the 12th and final round to knock out Postol even though to do so put himself and his wide lead at risk. Those at the MGM Grand Garden Arena appreciated that as much as his remarkable overall performance.

Indeed, rarely is a fighter of Postol's ability rendered so helpless, an indication of how good Crawford was that night.

"It was just too much … the speed. (Postol) just couldn't keep up with him," said Postol's trainer, Freddie Roach.

If Crawford isn't the best fighter in the world, pound for pound – and most won't give him that nod – he might be headed in that direction. RING

POUND FOR POUND: It was bound to happen sooner or later. Vasyl Lomachenko entered the list at No. 7 after stopping Roman Martinez (unrated) in a dazzling performance. His arrival ousted Kell Brook from the bottom spot. Terence Crawford then put on his own clinic with a 12-round befuddlement of Viktor Postol (unrated). "Bud" climbed from No. 6 to No. 5.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Unrated and unknown Joe Smith Jr. smacked Andrzej Fonfara (No. 8 last month) out of the ratings with an upset first-round knockout. Smith entered at No. 10 as a result. Isaac Chilemba got smacked less than expected by Sergey Kovalev (No. 1) but still lost by decision and dropped from No. 7 to No. 8.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: George Groves outpointed countryman Martin Murray (unrated) and rose from No. 5 to No. 4.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Almost-Golovkin opponent Chris Eubank Jr. (No. 7 last month) stopped unrated Tom Doran to rise one rung. Daniel Geale (No. 9) hasn't fought since June 2015 so he was removed and undefeated Pole Maciej Sulecki grabbed the No. 10 spot.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Demetrius Andrade (No. 6 last month) continued his comeback with a 12th-round knockout of Willie Nelson (unrated) and rose to No. 5. Carlos Molina, who has been fighting at welterweight, was replaced at No. 10 by Germany's Jack Culcay.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Keith Thurman (No. 3 last month) swapped spots with Amir Khan (No. 2) after winning a close but unanimous decision against Shawn Porter, who stayed put at No. 4.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Russian warhorse Ruslan Provodnikov (No. 3 last month) fell out of the ratings after losing a unanimous decision to John Molina, who entered at No. 10. With his crystal-clear victory over No. 1-rated Postol, Crawford (No. 2 at the time) became the 140-pound RING champion. His promotion left a space at No. 10 for the return of Regis Prograis while Postol remained at No. 1 above Lucas Matthysse, the man he upset last October.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Lomachenko rose from featherweight and wasted no time, taking a title from Martinez in his first bout at 130. Martinez dropped from No. 5 to No. 9 while Lomachenko entered at No. 3, which pushed Nicholas Walters off the list. Jason Sosa debuted at No. 10 and Javier Fortuna (No. 7 last month) bowed out after Sosa scored a come-from-behind stoppage in Round 11.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Lomachenko's departure lifted everybody up a notch and created space for Mexico's Jorge Lara at No. 10. Oscar Valdez (No. 8 last month) won a title and stepped up to No. 7 after a mercifully brief two rounds against Matias Rueda, whose unrated status was the only thing keeping Valdez from rising higher.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No. 7-rated Albert Pagara was surprisingly stopped by Cesar Juarez (unrated) and left the ratings. The resulting vacancy at No. 10 was taken by undefeated Mexican Moises Flores. Shingo Wake (No. 7 last month) then lost his rated status and title after being stopped by Jonathan Guzman, who entered at No. 9.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Rau'shee Warren (unrated) avenged his loss to Juan Carlos Payano (No. 2 last month) and took his title by majority decision. The U.S. Olympian came in at No. 4 while Payano dropped to No. 5.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Omar Narvaez (No. 4 last month) was removed since he has migrated to bantamweight and undefeated Japanese fighter Sho Ishida came in at No. 10. A steady diet of sacrificial lambs then caught up with Oleydong Sithsamerchai (No. 7 last month) and he was dropped. Ishida moved up and Rex Tso took No. 10 to become China's sole representative in the ratings.

FLYWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Alberto Rossel (No. 7 last month) has been fighting at a higher weight and was dropped, creating space for Japanese prodigy Ken Shiro at No. 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Knockout CP Freshmart (No. 4 last month) took a belt and the No. 2 rating from Byron Rojas, who slipped to No. 3. Denver Cuello (No. 7 last month) has been inactive for over a year and was removed. No. 10, no less important for being the bottom rank at the bottom of the ratings, was taken by Mexico's Saul Juarez.

Vasyl Lomachenko (left) entered the 130-pound ratings after stopping Roman Martinez.

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C TYSON FURY
232 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
584 • Ukraine • 64-4-0 (53 KOs)

2. DEONTAY WILDER
140 • U.S. • 37-0-0 (36 KOs)

3. KUBRAT PULEV
250 • Bulgaria • 23-1-0 (12 KOs)

4. LUIS ORTIZ
32 • Cuba • 25-0-0 (22 KOs)

5. ANTHONY JOSHUA
39 • U.K. • 17-0-0 (17 KOs)

6. BERMANE STIVERNE
170 • Canada • 25-2-1 (21 KOs)

7. JOSEPH PARKER
16 • New Zealand • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

8. BRYANT JENNINGS
123 • U.S. • 19-2-0 (10 KOs)

9. DAVID HAYE
11 • U.K. • 28-2-0 (26 KOs)

10. ANDY RUIZ JR.
8 • Mexico • 28-0-0 (19 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GRIGORY DROZD
147 • Russia • 40-1-0 (28 KOs)

2. DENIS LEBEDEV
339 • Russia • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)

3. KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
50 • Poland • 26-0-0 (16 KOs)

4. MARCO HUCK
229 • Germany • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)

5. TONY BELLEW
10 • U.K. • 27-2-1 (17 KOs)

6. FIRAT ARSLAN
195 • Germany • 37-8-2 (23 KOs)

7. OLEKSANDR USYK
43 • Ukraine • 9-0-0 (9 KOs)

8. MAIRIS BRIEDIS
22 • Latvia • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

9. ILUNGA MAKABU
159 • Congo • 19-2-0 (18 KOs)

10. YUNIER DORTICOS
10 • Cuba • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. SERGEY KOVALEV
184 • Russia • 30-0-1 (26 KOs)

2. ADONIS STEVENSON
164 • Canada • 27-1-0 (22 KOs)

3. BERNARD HOPKINS
530 • U.S. • 55-7-2 (32 KOs)

4. ELEIDER ALVAREZ
124 • Colombia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)

5. ANDRE WARD
18 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (15 KOs)

6. JUERGEN BRAEHMER
213 • Germany • 48-2-0 (35 KOs)

7. ARTUR BETERBIEV
85 • Russia • 10-0-0 (10 KOs)

8. ISAAC CHILEMBA
222 • Malawi • 24-4-2 (10 KOs)

9. VYACHESLAV SHABRANSKYY
32 • Ukraine • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)

10. JOE SMITH JR.
6 • U.S. • 22-1-0 (18 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. JAMES DEGALE
164 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (14 KOs)

2. BADOU JACK
66 • Sweden • 20-1-2 (12 KOs)

3. GILBERTO RAMIREZ
107 • Mexico • 34-0-0 (24 KOs)

4. GEORGE GROVES
242 • U.K. • 24-3-0 (18 KOs)

5. ANDRE DIRRELL
100 • U.S. • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)

6. CALLUM SMITH
60 • U.K. • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

7. ANTHONY DIRRELL
102 • U.S. • 29-1-1 (23 KOs)

8. ARTHUR ABRAHAM
355 • Armenia • 45-5-0 (30 KOs)

9. FELIX STURM
23 • Germany • 40-5-3 (18 KOs)

10. FEDOR CHUDINOV
64 • Russia • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C CANELO ALVAREZ
36 • Mexico • 47-1-1 (33 KOs)

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
242 • Kaz. • 35-0-0 (32 KOs)

2. DANIEL JACOBS
85 • U.S. • 31-1-0 (28 KOs)

3. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
87 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (12 KOs)

4. DAVID LEMIEUX
61 • Canada • 35-3-0 (32 KOs)

5. ANDY LEE
85 • Ireland • 34-3-1 (24 KOs)

6. CHRIS EUBANK JR.
68 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (18 KOs)

7. PETER QUILLIN
217 • U.S. • 32-1-1 (23 KOs)

8. HASSAN N'DAM
132 • Cameroon • 33-2-0 (19 KOs)

9. AVTANDIL KHURTSIDZE
21 • Georgia • 32-2-2 (21 KOs)

10. MACIEJ SULECKI
4 • Poland • 23-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. ERISLANDY LARA
265 • Cuba • 23-2-2 (13 KOs)

2. JERMALL CHARLO
111 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (18 KOs)

3. MIGUEL COTTO
36 • P.R. • 40-5-0 (33 KOs)

4. JERMELL CHARLO
142 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (13 KOs)

5. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
41 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

6. AUSTIN TROUT
217 • U.S. • 30-3-0 (17 KOs)

7. JULIAN WILLIAMS
85 • U.S. • 22-0-1 (14 KOs)

8. LIAM SMITH
46 • U.K. • 23-0-1 (13 KOs)

9. VANES MARTIROSYAN
347 • U.S. • 36-3-1 (21 KOs)

10. JACK CULCAY
6 • Germany • 22-1-0 (11 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KELL BROOK
275 • U.K. • 36-0-0 (25 KOs)

2. KEITH THURMAN
177 • U.S. • 27-0-0 (22 KOs)

3. AMIR KHAN
117 • U.K. • 31-4-0 (19 KOs)

4. SHAWN PORTER
138 • U.S. • 26-2-1 (16 KOs)

5. TIM BRADLEY
216 • U.S. • 33-2-1 (13 KOs)

6. DANNY GARCIA
52 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (18 KOs)

7. ERROL SPENCE
43 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

8. JESSIE VARGAS
21 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (10 KOs)

9. KONSTANTIN PONOMAREV
16 • Ukraine • 30-0-0 (13 KOs)

10. FRANKIE GOMEZ
12 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (13 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C TERENCE CRAWFORD
67 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (20 KOs)

1. VIKTOR POSTOL
154 • Ukraine • 28-1-0 (12 KOs)

2. LUCAS MATTHYSSE
277 • Argentina • 37-4-0 (34 KOs)

3. ADRIEN BRONER
117 • U.S. • 32-2-0 (24 KOs)

4. ANTONIO OROZCO
43 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

5. EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
35 • Russia • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

6. ADRIAN GRANADOS
21 • U.S. • 17-4-2 (12 KOs)

7. JACK CATTERALL
18 • U.K. • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)

8. RICKY BURNS
9 • U.K. • 40-5-1 (14 KOs)

9. JOHN MOLINA
7 • U.S. • 29-6-0 (23 KOs)

10. REGIS PROGRAIS
1 • U.S. • 18-0-0 (15 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. JORGE LINARES
125 • Venezuela • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

2. DEJAN ZLATICANIN
68 • Montenegro • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)

3. ANTHONY CROLLA
40 • U.K. • 31-4-3 (13 KOs)

4. TERRY FLANAGAN
42 • U.K. • 31-0-0 (12 KOs)

5. RANCES BARTHELEMY
32 • Cuba • 25-0-0 (14 KOs)

6. SHARIF BOGERE
91 • Uganda • 28-1-0 (19 KOs)

7. RICHARD COMMEY
61 • Ghana • 24-0-0 (22 KOs)

8. DENIS SHAFIKOV
68 • Russia • 37-2-1 (20 KOs)

9. ROBERT EASTER
17 • U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

10. FELIX VERDEJO
15 • Puerto Rico • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. FRANCISCO VARGAS
107 • Mexico • 23-0-2 (17 KOs)

2. ORLANDO SALIDO
97 • Mexico • 43-13-4 (30 KOs)

3. VASYL LOMACHENKO
7 • Ukraine • 6-1-0 (4 KOs)

4. TAKASHI MIURA
173 • Japan • 30-3-2 (23 KOs)

5. JEZREEL CORRALES
13 • Panama • 20-1-0 (8 KOs)

6. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
343 • Japan • 24-1-1 (20 KOs)

7. JOSE PEDRAZA
80 • P.R. • 22-0-0 (12 KOs)

8. ROMAN MARTINEZ
412 • P.R. • 29-3-3 (17 KOs)

9. SAUL RODRIGUEZ
36 • U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)

10. JASON SOSA
5 • U.S. • 19-1-4 (15 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GARY RUSSELL JR.
70 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)

2. LEO SANTA CRUZ
48 • U.S. • 32-0-1 (18 KOs)

3. LEE SELBY
124 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (8 KOs)

4. ABNER MARES
169 • Mexico • 29-2-1 (15 KOs)

5. SIMPIWE VETYEKA
138 • S. Africa • 29-3-0 (17 KOs)

6. JESUS CUELLAR
94 • Argentina • 28-1-0 (21 KOs)

7. OSCAR VALDEZ
16 • Mexico • 20-0-0 (18 KOs)

8. SATOSHI HOSONO
32 • Japan • 32-2-1 (21 KOs)

9. JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
18 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (11 KOs)

10. JORGE LARA
7 • Mexico • 28-0-2 (20 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
299 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

2. CARL FRAMPTON
201 • U.K. • 22-0-0 (14 KOs)

3. SCOTT QUIGG
192 • U.K. • 31-1-2 (23 KOs)

4. NONITO DONAIRE
70 • Phil. • 37-3-0 (24 KOs)

5. GENESIS SERVANIA
124 • Phil. • 27-0-0 (11 KOs)

6. REY VARGAS
85 • Mexico • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)

7. JESSIE MAGDALENO
59 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)

8. HUGO RUIZ
22 • Mexico • 36-3-0 (32 KOs)

9. JONATHAN GUZMAN
1 • Dom. Rep. • 22-0-0 (22 KOs)

10. MOISES FLORES
3 • Mexico • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING'S Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his champion weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
   247 • Japan • 25-0-2 (17 KOs)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
   435 • Panama • 36-4-1 (12 KOs)
3. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**
   169 • U.K. • 28-2-1 (13 KOs)
4. **RAU'SHEE WARREN**
   6 • U.S. • 14-1-0 (4 KOs)
5. **JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
   96 • Dom. Rep. • 17-1-0 (8 KOs)
6. **LEE HASKINS**
   59 • U.K. • 33-3-0 (14 KOs)
7. **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
   156 • Japan • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)
8. **PUNGLUANG SOR SINGYU**
   45 • Thailand • 52-3-0 (35 KOs)
9. **MARLON TAPALES**
   32 • Phil. • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
10. **ZOLANI TETE**
    20 • S. Africa • 24-3-0 (20 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **NAOYA INOUE**
   82 • Japan • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)
2. **CARLOS CUADRAS**
   221 • Mexico • 35-0-1 (27 KOs)
3. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
   169 • Thailand • 40-4-1 (37 KOs)
4. **MCJOE ARROYO**
   111 • P.R. • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)
5. **KOHEI KONO**
   41 • Japan • 32-8-1 (13 KOs)
6. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
   45 • Panama • 34-4-0 (24 KOs)
7. **KHALID YAFAI**
   20 • U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
8. **TAKUMA INOUE**
   8 • Japan • 7-0-0 (2 KOs)
9. **SHO ISHIDA**
   7 • Japan • 22-0-0 (11 KOs)
10. **REX TSO**
    3 • China • 19-0-0 (12 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C ROMAN GONZALEZ
142 • Nicaragua • 45-0-0 (38 KOs)

1. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
   173 • Mexico • 33-2-0 (24 KOs)
2. **KAZUTO IOKA**
   98 • Japan • 20-1-0 (12 KOs)
3. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   264 • U.S. • 36-5-0 (22 KOs)
4. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
   42 • Phil. • 22-3-0 (14 KOs)
5. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
   124 • S. Africa • 32-2-0 (21 KOs)
6. **AMNAT RUENROENG**
   116 • Thailand • 17-1-0 (5 KOs)
7. **EDGAR SOSA**
   220 • Mexico • 52-9-0 (30 KOs)
8. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   252 • Argentina • 36-3-0 (19 KOs)
9. **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
   99 • P.R. • 16-3-0 (14 KOs)
10. **NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI**
    57 • Thailand • 35-0-0 (28 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C DONNIE NIETES
251 • Phil. • 38-1-4 (22 KOs)

1. **RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
   85 • Japan • 24-2-1 (11 KOs)
2. **RANDY PETALCORIN**
   116 • Phil. • 23-2-1 (18 KOs)
3. **PEDRO GUEVARA**
   174 • Mexico • 28-2-1 (17 KOs)
4. **AKIRA YAEGASHI**
   30 • Japan • 24-5-0 (12 KOs)
5. **JAVIER MENDOZA**
   68 • Mexico • 24-3-1 (19 KOs)
6. **MILAN MELINDO**
   89 • Phil. • 34-2-0 (12 KOs)
7. **GANIGAN LOPEZ**
   21 • Mexico • 28-6-0 (17 KOs)
8. **REY LORETO**
   68 • Phil. • 22-13-0 (14 KOs)
9. **MOISES FUENTES**
   15 • Mexico • 24-2-1 (13 KOs)
10. **KEN SHIRO**
    3 • Japan • 7-0-0 (4 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
   267 • Thailand • 42-0-0 (17 KOs)
2. **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
   95 • Thailand • 13-0-0 (6 KOs)
3. **BYRON ROJAS**
   19 • Nicaragua • 17-3-3 (8 KOs)
4. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
   201 • S. Africa • 29-2-0 (9 KOs)
5. **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
   30 • Mexico • 18-3-1 (10 KOs)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   174 • Japan • 30-8-0 (12 KOs)
7. **CARLOS BUITRAGO**
   198 • Nicaragua • 29-2-1 (17 KOs)
8. **RIKU KANO**
   9 • Japan • 10-1-1 (5 KOs)
9. **JOSE JIMENEZ**
   9 • Colombia • 17-5-1 (7 KOs)
10. **SAUL JUAREZ**
    3 • Mexico • 23-4-1 (12 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
   112 • Nicaragua • 45-0-0 (38 KOs)
2. **SERGEY KOVALEV**
   72 • Russia • 30-0-1 (26 KOs)
3. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
   76 • Kazakhstan • 35-0-0 (32 KOs)
4. **ANDRE WARD**
   46 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (15 KOs)
5. **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
   65 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (20 KOs)
6. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
   153 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)
7. **VASYL LOMACHENKO**
   7 • Ukraine • 6-1-0 (4 KO)
8. **CANELO ALVAREZ**
   36 • Mexico • 47-1-1 (33 KOs)
9. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
   63 • Japan • 25-0-2 (17 KOs)
10. **NAOYA INOUE**
    16 • Japan • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

●	UNITED STATES	37	▲ 5
●	UNITED KINGDOM	22	
●	MEXICO	20	▲ 2
●	JAPAN	15	▲ 1
●	PHILIPPINES	8	▼ 2
●	RUSSIA	7	▼ 1
●	PUERTO RICO	6	
●	THAILAND	6	▼ 2
●	UKRAINE	6	
●	CUBA	5	
●	GERMANY	4	▲ 1
●	SOUTH AFRICA	4	
●	ARGENTINA	3	▼ 1
●	CANADA	3	
●	NICARAGUA	3	
●	PANAMA	3	
●	COLOMBIA	2	
●	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	
●	POLAND	2	
	ARMENIA	1	
	BULGARIA	1	
	CAMEROON	1	
	CHINA	1	▲ 1
	CONGO	1	
	GEORGIA	1	
	GHANA	1	
	IRELAND	1	
	KAZAKHSTAN	1	
	LATVIA	1	
	MALAWI	1	
	MONTENEGRO	1	
	NEW ZEALAND	1	
	SWEDEN	1	
	UGANDA	1	
	VENEZUELA	1	

Countries out (from last month): *Australia, Jamaica and Peru*

Countries in: *China*

● 30 OR MORE ● 20 - 29 ● 10 - 19 ● 5 - 9 ● 2 - 4

LATIN AMERICA VS. WORLD

We never thought we'd see the day that Mexico would have a fighter in the heavyweight Top 10 while Russia didn't, yet here we are. Unbeaten Andy Ruiz has worked his way into the RING Ratings. Of course, Ruiz is only among the latest of many fighters from Latin American nations represented here. That region has at least one fighter in all but one division. Here's how it compares to the rest of the world:

DIVISION	LATIN	WORLD
HEAVYWEIGHTS	2	9
CRUISERWEIGHTS	1	9
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	1	9
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	1	9
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	1	10
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	2	8
WELTERWEIGHTS	0	10
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	1	10
LIGHTWEIGHTS	3	7
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	5	5
FEATHERWEIGHTS	4	6
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	5	5
BANTAMWEIGHTS	2	8
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS	3	7
FLYWEIGHTS	5	6
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	4	7
STRAWWEIGHTS	5	5
TOTAL	45	130

BEST BY COUNTRY

The best fighter from each country with at least three fighters in the RING ratings (as selected by the editorial staff).

UNITED STATES – TERENCE CRAWFORD »

UNITED KINGDOM – KELL BROOK

MEXICO – CANELO ALVAREZ

JAPAN – SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

PHILIPPINES – DONNIE NIETES

RUSSIA – SERGEY KOVALEV

PUERTO RICO – MIGUEL COTTO

THAILAND – WANHENG MENAYOTHIN

UKRAINE – VASYL LOMACHENKO

CUBA – GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX

GERMANY – MARCO HUCK

SOUTH AFRICA – HEKKIE BUDLER

ARGENTINA – LUCAS MATTHYSSE

CANADA – ADONIS STEVENSON

NICARAGUA – ROMAN GONZALEZ

PANAMA – ANSELMO MORENO

CRAWFORD: MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK; ALVAREZ: HOGAN PHOTOS

FOCUS ON . . .

FLYWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 112-pounders.

Brian Viloria has been a rated flyweight for more than five years.

MOST WEEKS RATED: BRIAN VILORIA **264**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: JOHNRIEL CASIMERO **42**

OLDEST: EDGAR SOSA **36**

YOUNGEST: NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI **24**

MOST FIGHTS: SOSA **61**

FEWEST FIGHTS: AMNAT RUENROENG **18**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: ROMAN GONZALEZ, POR CHOKCHAI **100 PERCENT**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: SOSA **85.2 PERCENT**

MOST KOS: GONZALEZ **38**

FEWEST KOS: RUENROENG **5**

LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK: GONZALEZ **45 FIGHTS**

ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: GONZALEZ **(NO. 1)**

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: CASIMERO **(IBF),** JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA **(WBA, WBO),** GONZALEZ **(RING, WBC)**

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): DAIGO HIGA, TAKUYA KOGAWA, THOMAS MASSON, IWAN ZODA AND SHIMING ZOU

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

DOUG FISCHER RINGTV.COM EDITOR

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BRIAN HARTY RING MAGAZINE MANAGING EDITOR

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BANTAMWEIGHT: NAOYA INOUE
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

MITCH ABRAMSON STAFF WRITER

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: LEO SANTA CRUZ
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

Note: *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

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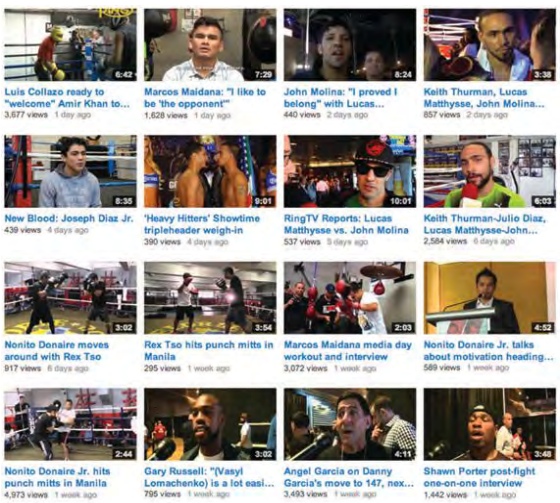

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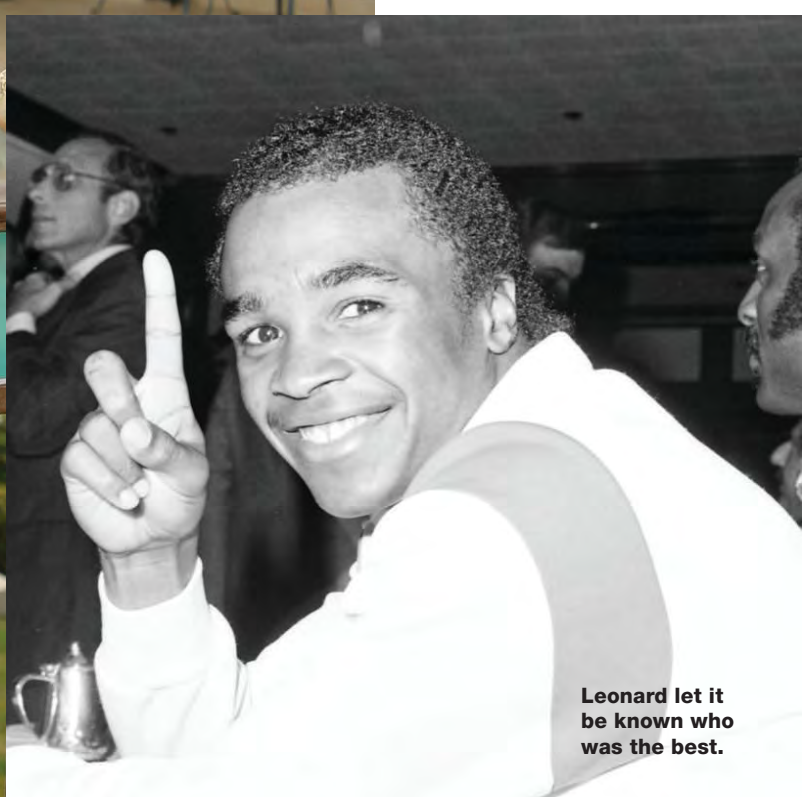
Sugar Ray Leonard looks as if he could step back into the ring at 60.

SWEET 60

SUGAR RAY LEONARD LOOKS BACK ON HIS BOXING CAREER WITH AWE AND APPRECIATES WHAT HE HAS TODAY

By **Bill Dwyre** • Photos by **Chris Farina**



Leonard let it be known who was the best.

INSET: THE RING MAGAZINE

Sugar Ray Leonard knew that May 17 was a special day. But he hadn't stopped to dwell on it a lot. He has been like that most of his life – a man on the move, always in motion, involved, committed, almost hyperactive.

He was returning from a trip, and when he got to the front gate of his home in Pacific Palisades – the one with ivy everywhere on the outside walls and a putting green and tennis court off to the side – he knew something was up. You can't fool a guy who won world boxing titles in five weight categories, and who was seldom fooled by any ring opponent, in a career that brought a 36-3-1 record and is still pushing historians to find new superlatives.

"My wife greeted me with a blindfold and made me put it on,"

he says. "I knew what day it was, but I also knew that I had told her I didn't want anything that would be a big deal."

Instead of demanding some answers, the travel-weary Leonard symbolically saluted and went off to bed for a nap, as he was told to do. He would be summoned soon, Bernadette said. Obviously, more time was needed for decorations and preparations.

Summoned soon he was, entering the massive foyer of Chez Leonard to be greeted by celebrating family and friends.

There it was. Happy Birthday, Champ. Happy Big One. Sugar Ray Leonard had turned 60.

That may be harder for some of us to deal with than it is for Leonard. If he has aged, that means we have too. He was young and vital when we were. Now he is 60. Fill in your own blanks.

The ever-young, ever-indestructible boxing star of our youth is now well into his AARP eligibility. Our memory quivers. The machine-gun, rat-a-tat-tat of punches that he unleashed on opponents, followed by some Fred Astaire dance steps and an occasional bolo punch threat just for the heck of it, now has wrinkles.

How can that be? Can it be?

"You know, 60, it's just a number," Leonard says, dishing out the cliche for effect before letting a twinkle in his eye hint at more to come.

"I don't feel it at all, this 60 stuff," he says. "But you know what it means … it means I can't come back. When you are 55, 57, even 58, you have that in the back of your mind. 'Hey, I can still come back.' You know you can't, but it's still kind of there. But then you hit 60 and you know. You can't come back."

Leonard may have lost a step or two but he hasn't lost his sense of humor. He was the king of the comebacks. He came back more often than a boomerang. He would win a huge fight and quickly tell the press that that was it, he was retiring. A few months later, he would recant and start chomping at the bit for the next victim. Even he has lost count of his boxing retirements. That is part of his story, of his charm, of a boxing history that has never seemed to have much negativity stick.

THOUGHTS ON LEONARD

Industry insiders, including some of those who shared the ring with Sugar Ray Leonard, give their thoughts on one of the greatest fighters who ever lived.

BOB ARUM
PROMOTER

Ray was extraordinarily talented and an artist in the ring but more importantly he lit up a screen. He radiated charm and intensity and you just wanted to root for him. Other than his great ability, these qualities set him apart from all the other great fighters of his era.

ROBERTO DURAN
THREE-TIME OPPONENT

He was the fastest fighter I ever fought but in the first fight I saw everything that was coming at me. He made adjustments and I have to say Sugar Ray Leonard (is my best overall opponent) because look at what he did in his career after he lost to me.

"I wasn't happy when I wasn't a fighter," he says. "I was meant to be a fighter."

He has also been quoted frequently as describing himself as "the type of guy who likes to see how close I can get to the edge of the mountain."

At 60, there are fewer mountains, just joy. There was a large dose of that just listening to him, sitting in the same foyer where his family and friends celebrated his milestone birthday. Just being around him.

He rationalizes, as all of us in our twilight tend to do.

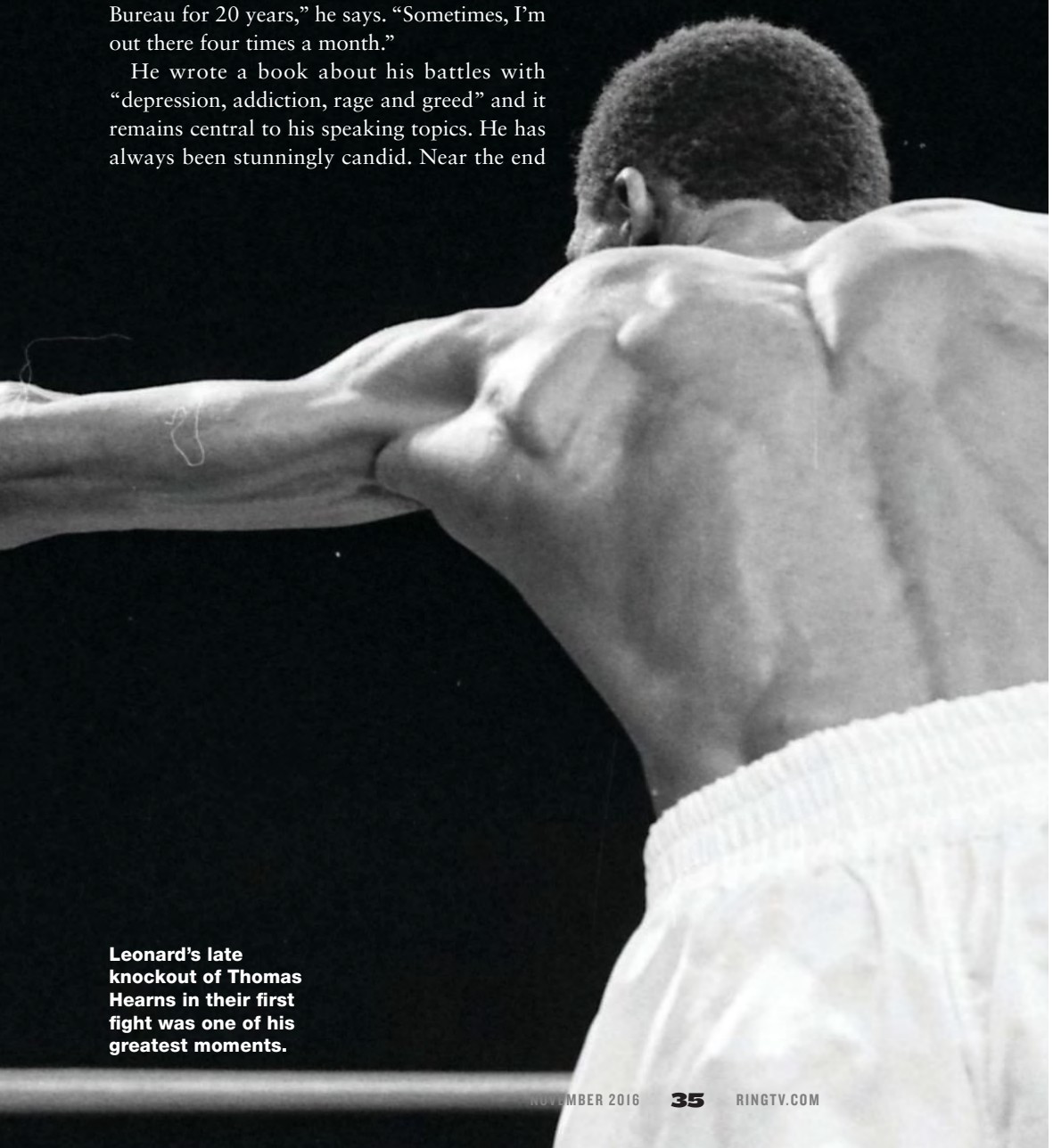
"You know, when you get older, you get a lot better at a lot of things," he says. "I keep moving, keep creating. I was never meant to be bored. … I can't fathom doing nothing."

He is a frequent motivational speaker. "I have been with the Washington Speakers Bureau for 20 years," he says. "Sometimes, I'm out there four times a month."

He wrote a book about his battles with "depression, addiction, rage and greed" and it remains central to his speaking topics. He has always been stunningly candid. Near the end of his storied career in the early 1990s, when adulation was the norm for Leonard, an article in The Los Angeles Times disrupted all that, reporting his drug addiction and even violence toward his first wife, Juanita. That sort of story is the signal for most athletes, today as much as in the past, to get defensive, deny and blame the messenger, the media. Not Leonard. He called a news conference, admitted what he had done and vowed to never go down that road again.

On March 31, 1991, the day after The Times report, Leonard met the press, said he was doing so because "the public was entitled to an explanation," and said what he had done was "wrong, childish and stupid."

How long has it been since any major athlete faced the music like that and didn't blink? Nothing similar pops to mind.



Leonard's late knockout of Thomas Hearns in their first fight was one of his greatest moments.

DAVE "BOY" GREEN
OPPONENT

I think he's the greatest fighter we've ever seen, not because he beat me but because he beat Hagler, Hearns, Duran and Benitez. He was different class the night we fought and even said the left hook that knocked me out was the best punch he ever threw. Nobody realized just how great Sugar Ray Leonard was until he left the scene. He's a great man and a great fighter.

JOE GALLAGHER
TRAINER

We'd lost (Muhammad) Ali and all of a sudden Sugar Ray Leonard was there with the white boots, the tassels and the bolo punches. He had absolutely everything: speed, power, skill, killer instinct, and it was all masked by that charming smile.

COLIN HART
WRITER

I covered his (first) fight with Tommy Hearns and picked Ray because I felt he was the better all-rounder. I have always said, Leonard is the finest pound-for-pound fighter I've ever seen in the flesh.

Leonard can be refreshingly candid about events long gone, and less serious.

He won a gold medal in the 1976 Olympics, but said there were never expectations of great fanfare and personal rewards.

"There was talk that I might be in line to be the guy on the Wheaties box," he says, "but that wasn't going to happen because, by then, I had had a child out of wedlock, and in those days, that just wasn't going to fly in this country. I understood that."

The Wheaties box went to decathlon gold medalist Bruce Jenner, who is now Caitlyn Jenner.

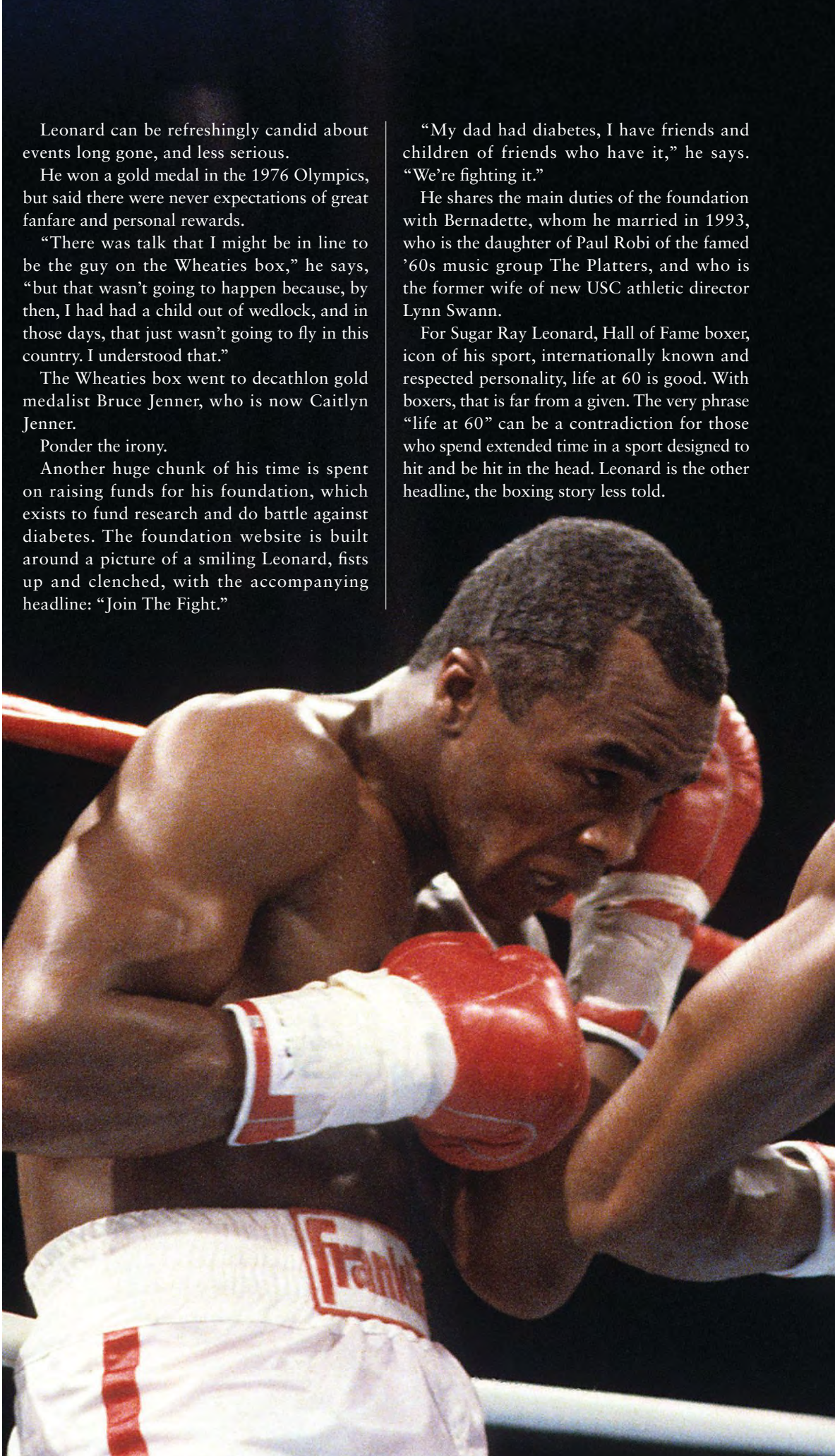
Ponder the irony.

Another huge chunk of his time is spent on raising funds for his foundation, which exists to fund research and do battle against diabetes. The foundation website is built around a picture of a smiling Leonard, fists up and clenched, with the accompanying headline: "Join The Fight."

"My dad had diabetes, I have friends and children of friends who have it," he says. "We're fighting it."

He shares the main duties of the foundation with Bernadette, whom he married in 1993, who is the daughter of Paul Robi of the famed '60s music group The Platters, and who is the former wife of new USC athletic director Lynn Swann.

For Sugar Ray Leonard, Hall of Fame boxer, icon of his sport, internationally known and respected personality, life at 60 is good. With boxers, that is far from a given. The very phrase "life at 60" can be a contradiction for those who spend extended time in a sport designed to hit and be hit in the head. Leonard is the other headline, the boxing story less told.



LARRY HOLMES
FORMER HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP

There was a lot of respect between fighters in those days and Ray was always a great guy. We spent a whole day together shooting a Ford commercial once and that's when I really got to know him. Ray Leonard could fight and he had a ton of heart.

DONNY LALONDE
OPPONENT

When Ray was hurt a radar seemed to surround him and you couldn't land clean. He became impossible to hit, his head would clear and, from there, he had the tenacity, the will, the fortitude and the balls to put it all on the line. The things you can't buy … Ray had all of them.

RAY LEONARD JR.
SON

My father was an artist and a transformational figure. He attacks life now just like he did in the ring all those years ago and that makes me prouder (of him) than of any of those countless world championships. There will only ever be one Sugar Ray Leonard and, yes, he is still "just my dad."

He had 40 fights as a pro and countless more as an amateur. All too many were wars, but there were no other ways when the fighters on the other stool were named Roberto Duran, Tommy Hearns and Marvin Hagler. The NFL had its Fearsome Foursome and, in the late 1970s and 1980s, boxing had its equivalent: Leonard, Duran, Hearns and Hagler. Leonard beat them all, losing only to Duran, fighting to a draw with Hearns in one of their two fights and getting more than even for his Duran loss in the second fight, when a beaten and frustrated Duran stopped in the eighth round and indicated to the referee, "No mas."

As we look now at Leonard at 60, expectations fairly could have been of a man shuffling along behind a walker or slurring his words. Or of a man having done like all too many of his peers and run through millions of dollars like it was Monopoly money.

The internet puts Leonard's net worth at $120 million, and even the internet can't be that far off.

Possibly as valuable to Leonard as the dollars are the memories.

"Without boxing," he says, "I'd have none of them. Sometimes, I think about things and I get puzzled about how it all happened to me and I laugh. I laugh at this world of mine and how it all turned out."

Like having dinner with Nelson Mandela.

"I was in South Africa and was invited to dinner at his house," Leonard says.

"I go to the front door and he answers it. Can you imagine? He answers the door himself. Just being invited meant the world to me, and then he answers the door. He hugged me. I got weak in the legs. I ended up giving him one of my championship belts."

Leonard says the dinner, with Mandela and his family, was relaxed and normal, so much so that it was hard to believe it was real.

"When I first met him, he looked at me and said, 'You have inspired me,'" Leonard

THE RING MAGAZINE

Leonard sealed his legacy when he came out of retirement to outpoint Marvin Hagler.

PAULIE MALIGNAGGI
FIGHTER/BROADCASTER

People couldn't get enough of Leonard and that's because he was magnetizing without being over the top. As a fighter, he always seemed to have control of the moment and no promotion was too big. Leonard was made for the bright lights, cool under pressure and had quiet killer instinct.

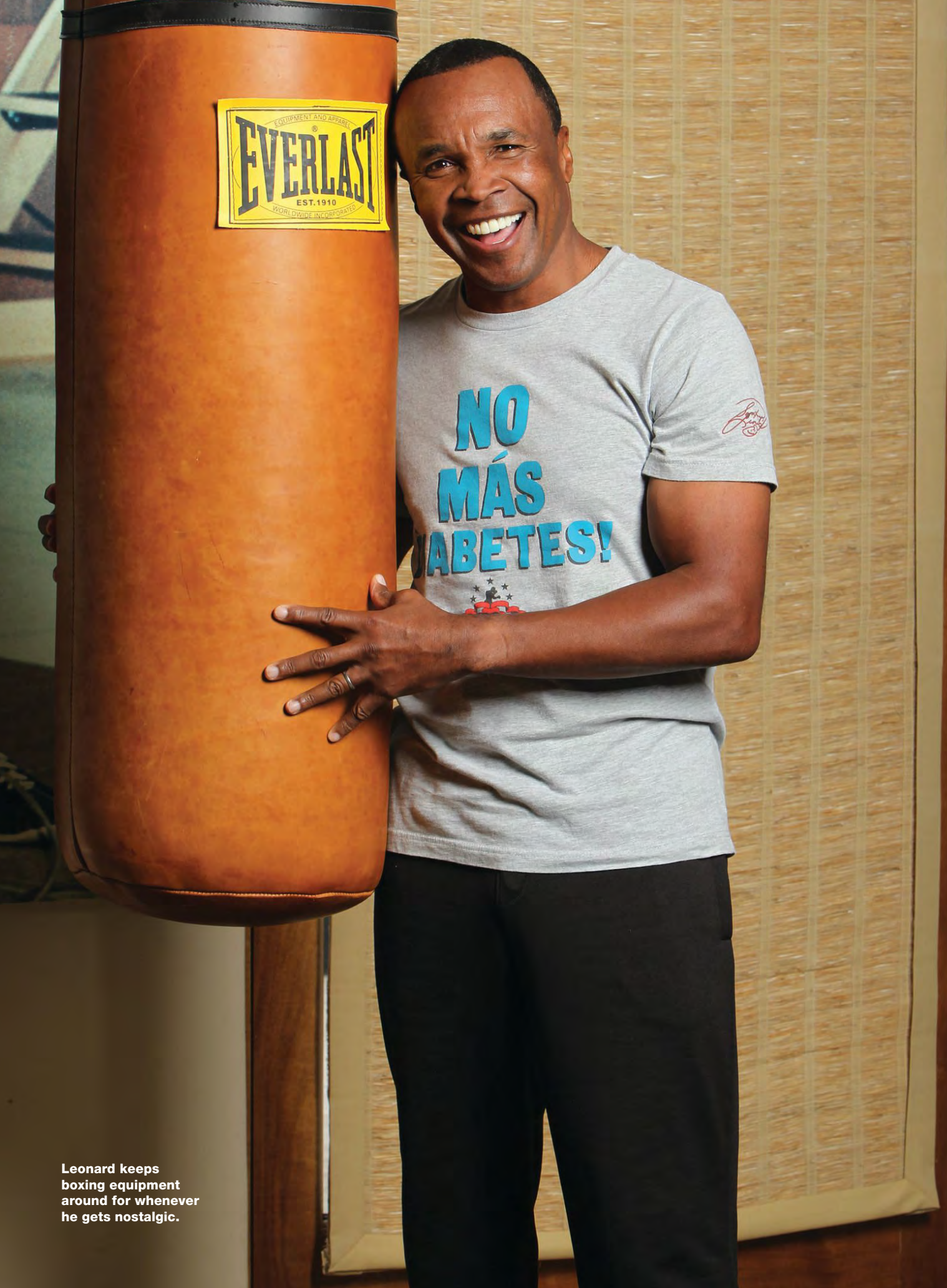
LARRY MERCHANT
BROADCASTER

Somebody once asked me what the difference was between Ray and another fighter and I said, "It seems to me that he doesn't just want to be a great fighter or a great champion but a great man." He always had the highest kind of ambitions for an athlete.

BARRY TOMPKINS
BROADCASTER

Ray once explained to me how to beat Hagler. He said, "You rally three times in each round – particularly at the end of rounds – throw as many punches as you can and you'll steal the fight." That was before the fight was even announced and about one year later he went out there and did it.

– Tom Gray



Leonard keeps boxing equipment around for whenever he gets nostalgic.

says. "I said, 'Sir, contraire, you have inspired me.'"

Without boxing, Leonard might have never gotten close enough to Tiger Woods to get a putting tip.

"Don't raise your head," Woods told Leonard.

There is obviously more value in that for Leonard than Woods might have thought. A pillow on a couch in the Leonard household reads, "Life's a game, but golf is serious."

Without boxing, Ray Leonard would have never become Sugar Ray.

"It was just too natural, too logical," he says, "with the name Ray."

And so, there came a night in the late 1970s, before a fight at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, that Leonard had to meet his image-maker, the legendary Sugar Ray Robinson.

"I'm basically shy, and back then, I was really that way," Leonard says. "But he was at the fight and I had never met him and I needed to. I went up to him and I said, 'Hi, Mr. Robinson. My name is Sugar Ray. I hope it is OK that I used your name.'

"He said, 'I'd be honored.'"

Leonard says it took a lot for him to just make the approach. He and the media had hijacked the name of the boxer whom many, even to this day, consider to be the greatest of all time. Leonard says he had no idea how Robinson would react. Would he demand to know how Leonard had the gall to grab a name and all the glitter that came with it?

"I was really scared what he would say," Leonard says, "and then he was so nice. It was really just a quick hello and goodbye, but I'll always remember it. It's the only time I ever talked to him."

Sugar Ray Robinson died in Los Angeles in 1989, just three weeks shy of his 68th birthday.

Leonard also got to chat with another icon over another borrowed name. Leonard's parents named him after revered singer Ray Charles.

"He came to the second Duran fight, the No Mas fight," Leonard says. "He sang 'America the Beautiful.'"

For the new Sugar Ray, everything was beautiful that night. He was avenging his earlier defeat to Duran – his first loss as a pro – when Duran decided he had had enough.

"I didn't believe it at first," Leonard says. "I thought it was some kind of trick. I thought he was just trying to lure me in closer. This couldn't be coming from Roberto Duran, of all people. He was always an explosion of bravado."

Leonard says he and Duran are friends now. Same thing goes for the other two of the Fearsome Foursome, although Leonard says there have been moments of reticence from Hagler.

"We were at a Hall of Fame dinner," Leonard says, "and Richard Steele was there. He was the referee at our fight, and so I find Marvin and I say, 'Let's have our picture taken with Richard.' Marvin says no way. He says he won't do it because I paid off Steele to help me win the fight. So I say to Marvin, 'I'll have him raise both our arms.' And Marvin says, 'OK.'"

Leonard says he is working on something for television that involves all four of them, although he admitted his thoughts, and the project, are still vague and not far along.

"Duran is on board, Tommy (Hearns) is in," Leonard says, "but Marvin is a little tougher."

The decision for Leonard over Hagler was a controversial split by the judges. One had Leonard winning all but two rounds, 118-110. Los Angeles Times columnist Jim Murray apparently agreed. He wrote afterward that Leonard made Hagler look like a "clumsy old man."

The other two judges had it 115-113, but for different boxers. Hagler never felt he got a fair shake and never fought again.

"I kind of understand how hard it can be," Leonard says. "I don't think Joe Frazier ever forgave Muhammad Ali."

At 60, Sugar Ray Leonard's walks down memory lane are both appropriate and refreshing.

When he was losing his first fight against Hearns, Sept. 16, 1981, Leonard's trainer, Angelo Dundee, memorably told him in the corner, with all the TV cameras on it, "You're blowing it now, son."

Leonard says, "I was dead tired. My left eye was nearly closed. And I wasn't going to give up."

He fought Hearns again eight years later and they fought brilliantly and valiantly to a draw.

When he lost his first fight to Duran, he says he never remembered being hit so hard or so often.

"I thought there were two guys in the ring against me," he says.

Now, Leonard lives in a beautiful house in a prestigious Southern California neighborhood. He has a workout room with trophies and plaques and special mementos hanging all around. There are pictures of him on the cover of Sports Illustrated, the cover of THE RING Magazine. There is the fight program from the 1970s that lists ringside ticket prices at $20.

"I look at that and all I can say is, 'Wow,'" Leonard says.

He has four kids and a wife who dazzled him with a 60th birthday party and may just try to top that at 70. Maybe she'll get the Rolling Stones in the driveway and Marvin Hagler as the master of ceremonies. Hagler might even smile.

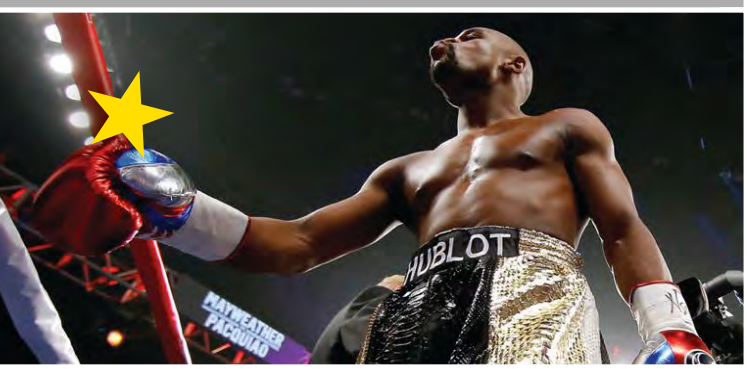
Sugar Ray Leonard, as dynamic after the fights as he was during them, walks toward that next decade with nary a pause. There are things to do, people to see, money to raise, places to bless with your presence. In many ways, he says, it gets better as you get older.

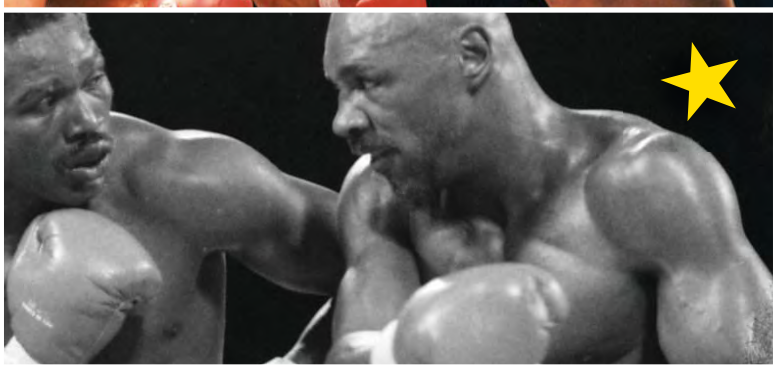
"The longer you are around," he says, "the better obit they'll have in the paper for you."

Bill Dwyre is a longtime sports editor and columnist for The Los Angeles Times. He retired from the paper in 2015, but writes on, in hopes of a better obit.

Note: For more quotes on Sugar Ray Leonard, scan the QR code or go to http://bit.do/ray-leonard.

LIVING





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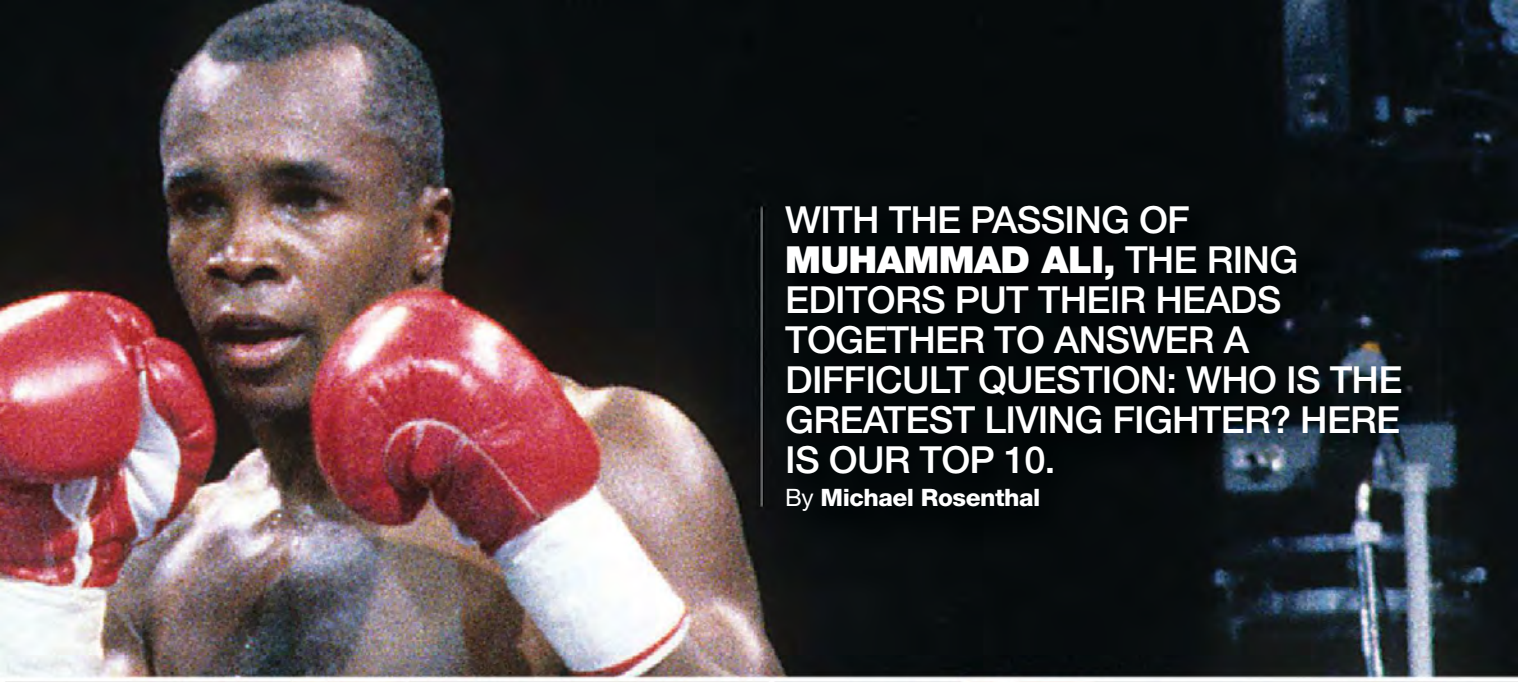
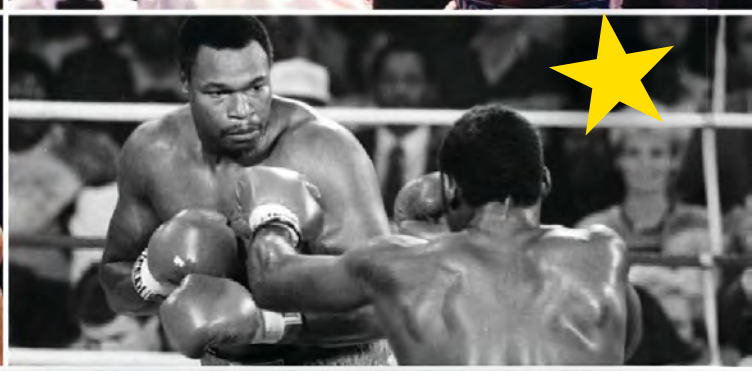


WITH THE PASSING OF **MUHAMMAD ALI,** THE RING EDITORS PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER TO ANSWER A DIFFICULT QUESTION: WHO IS THE GREATEST LIVING FIGHTER? HERE IS OUR TOP 10.

By **Michael Rosenthal**



The question was raised early this year as a group of knowledgeable boxing people – writers, publicists and others who have been around the sport for many years – had dinner the night before a big fight in Las Vegas:

Who is the greatest living fighter, pound for pound?

The first name out of almost everyone's mouth was Muhammad Ali, arguably the greatest heavyweight of all time and one of the best without regard to weight. "The Greatest" was truly the greatest.

Since that meeting, sadly, we lost Ali. So the answer to the question that was asked that evening in Las Vegas isn't quite as cut and dry.

Who is it? Who is the greatest living fighter?

THE RING editors, with input from knowledgeable contributors, came up with a Top 10 list of the best living fighters. We know our choices will spark debate – they did so among ourselves – but we feel they're a good place to start. »

NO. 1
SUGAR RAY LEONARD

Birthplace: Wilmington, N.C.

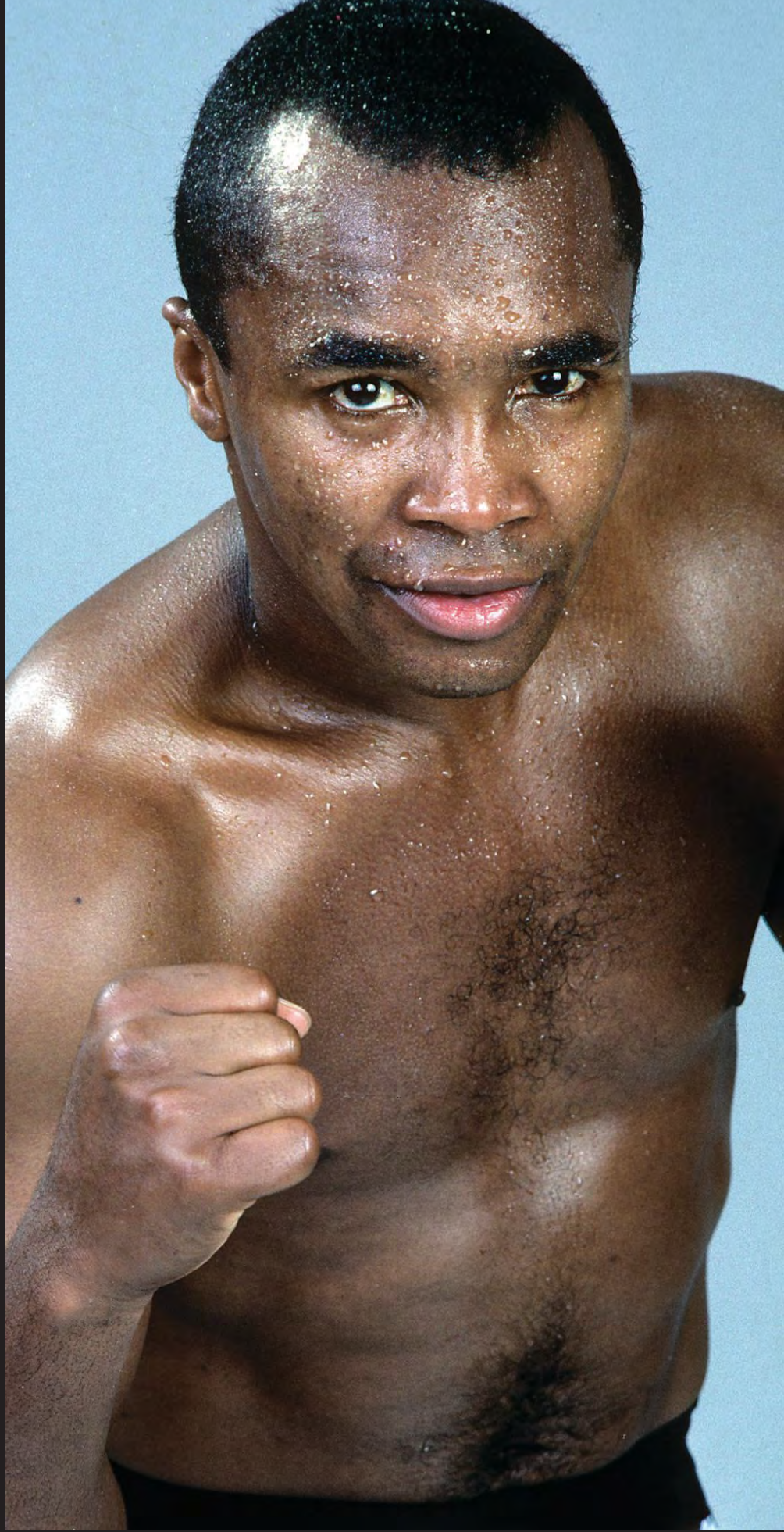
Active: 1977-97

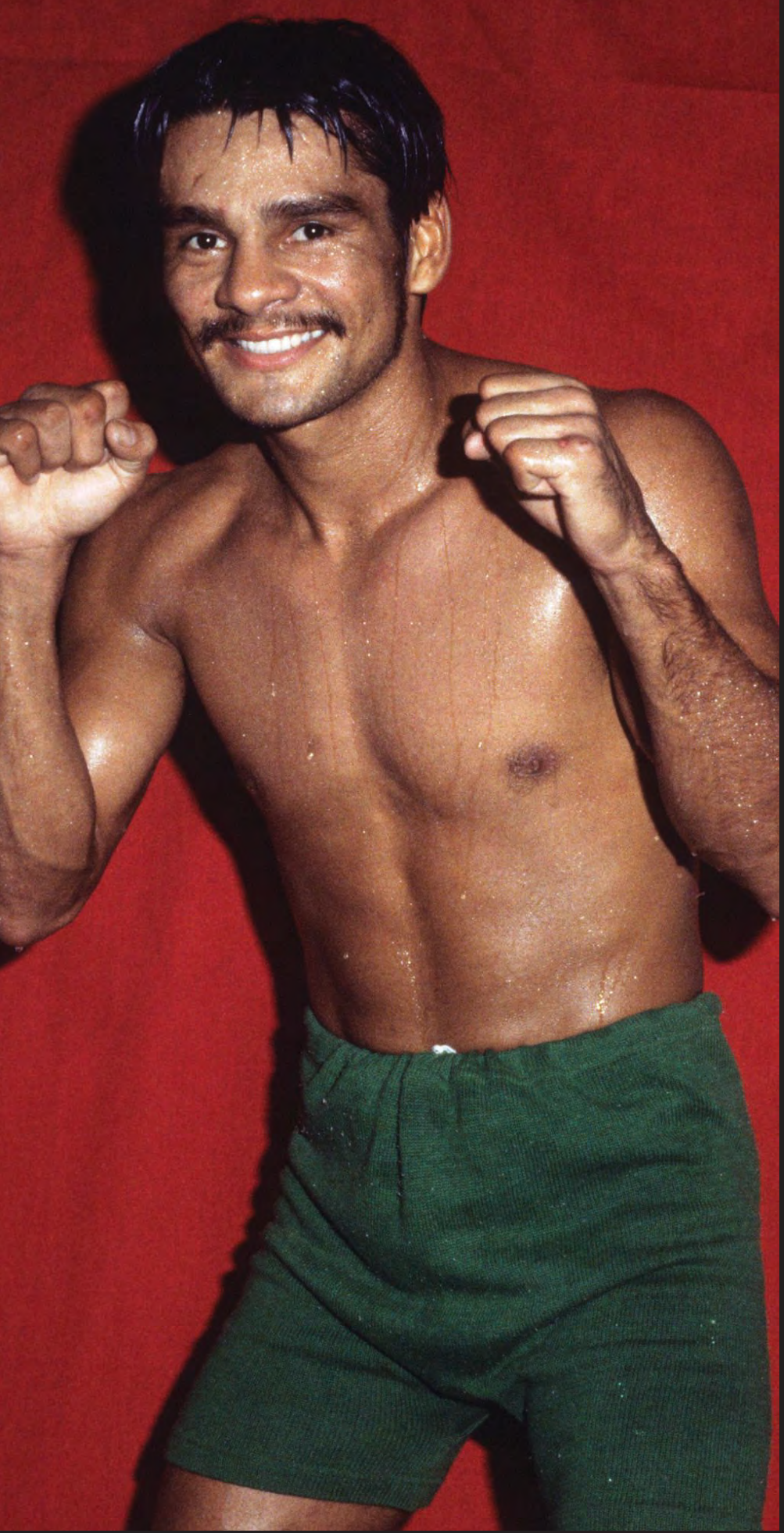
Record: 36-3-1 (25 KOs)

Major titles: RING welterweight (1979-80 and 1980-82), WBC welterweight (1979-80 and 1980-82), WBA welterweight (1981-82), RING junior middleweight (1981-82), WBA junior middleweight (1981), RING middleweight (1987), WBC middleweight (1987), WBC super middleweight (1988-90), WBC light heavyweight (1988).

Key victories: Wilfred Benitez (first world title) TKO 15, 1979, Roberto Duran ("No Mas" rematch) TKO 8, 1980, Thomas Hearns (first fight) TKO 14, 1981; Marvin Hagler SD, 1987.

Summary: Sugar Ray Leonard burst upon the scene with a dazzling array of tools – athleticism, speed, power, fighting spirit, charisma and a million-dollar smile – in the 1976 Olympics and built a pro career that allowed him, more than anyone else, to fill the void when Muhammad Ali stepped away. When Leonard did the same in 1997, he was a beloved icon and remains so today. And it should be noted that he attained that status even though a detached retina stole a number of his best years. Leonard left no doubt about his ability as a pro by outboxing and then stopping prodigy Wilfred Benitez to win his first title in 1979. Leonard avenged his loss to the great Roberto Duran in their immediate rematch, the "No Mas" fight, in which Duran was so frustrated that he quit. Leonard was never better. And then, the following year, he rallied to stop Thomas Hearns in the 14th round to become the undisputed king of boxing. Leonard "retired" with the eye injury in 1982 but had one more indelible moment. In 1987, having been out of the ring for almost three years, he did the impossible in perhaps the most magic moment of his career: He beat Marvin Hagler to win the middleweight championship. Greatness.





NO. 2
ROBERTO DURAN

Birthplace: El Chorrillo, Panama

Active: 1968-2001

Record: 103-16 (70 KOs)

Major titles: RING (1972-79), WBA lightweight (1972-79), WBC lightweight (1978-79), RING welterweight (1980), WBC welterweight (1980), WBA junior middleweight (1983-84), WBC middleweight (1989-90).

Key victories: Ken Buchanan (first title) TKO 13, 1972; Esteban De Jesus (avenges first loss), KO 11, 1974; Sugar Ray Leonard (his greatest victory) UD, 1980; Davey Moore (wins junior middleweight title) TKO 8, 1983; Iran Barkley (wins middleweight title) SD, 1989.

Summary: The superlatives never end. Roberto Duran had much more than "Hands of Stone," his alias. He had sublime skills and the mindset of an assassin. His ferocity was focused in the ring but his passion often bubbled over outside it. Yes, he had the power to hurt his opponents. He had 70 knockouts, a number that exceeds the total bouts of most boxers. And, of course, he had the resume. Duran could've punched his ticket to the International Boxing Hall of Fame by virtue of his lightweight run alone, after which his record stood at 63-1. However, after jumping to welterweight, he recorded a historic victory over then-unbeaten superstar Sugar Ray Leonard to clinch his status as a legend. Duran would claim more successes and suffer disappointments, including losses to Leonard (in the "No Mas" rematch), Marvin Hagler and Thomas Hearns. And he would fight far too long, retiring at 50 in 2001. Memories of his career remain largely unsullied, though. Simply put, Roberto Duran had it all – ability, accomplishments and the ability to touch so many fans with his fire.

NO. 3
PERNELL WHITAKER

Birthplace: Norfolk, Va.

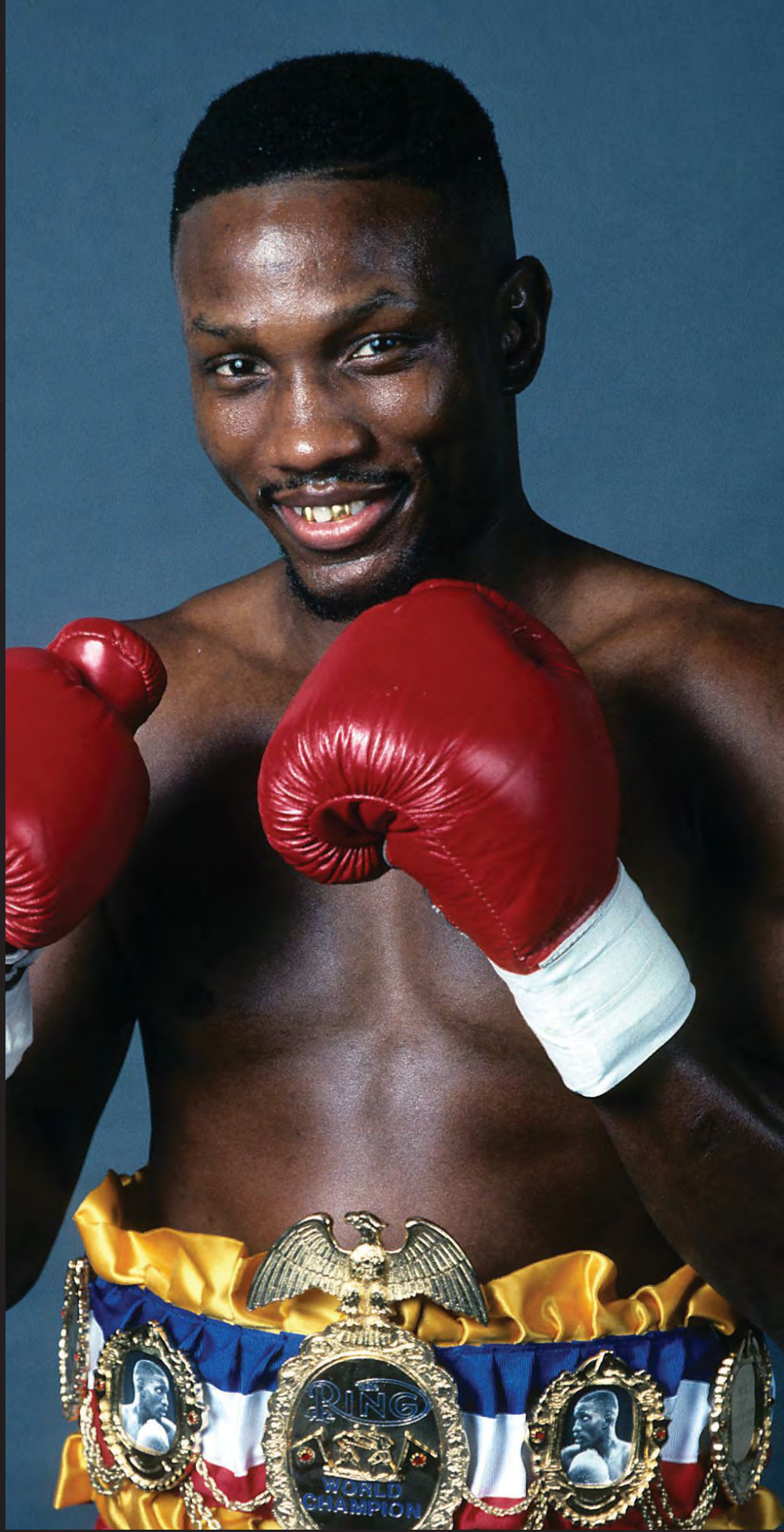
Active: 1984-2001

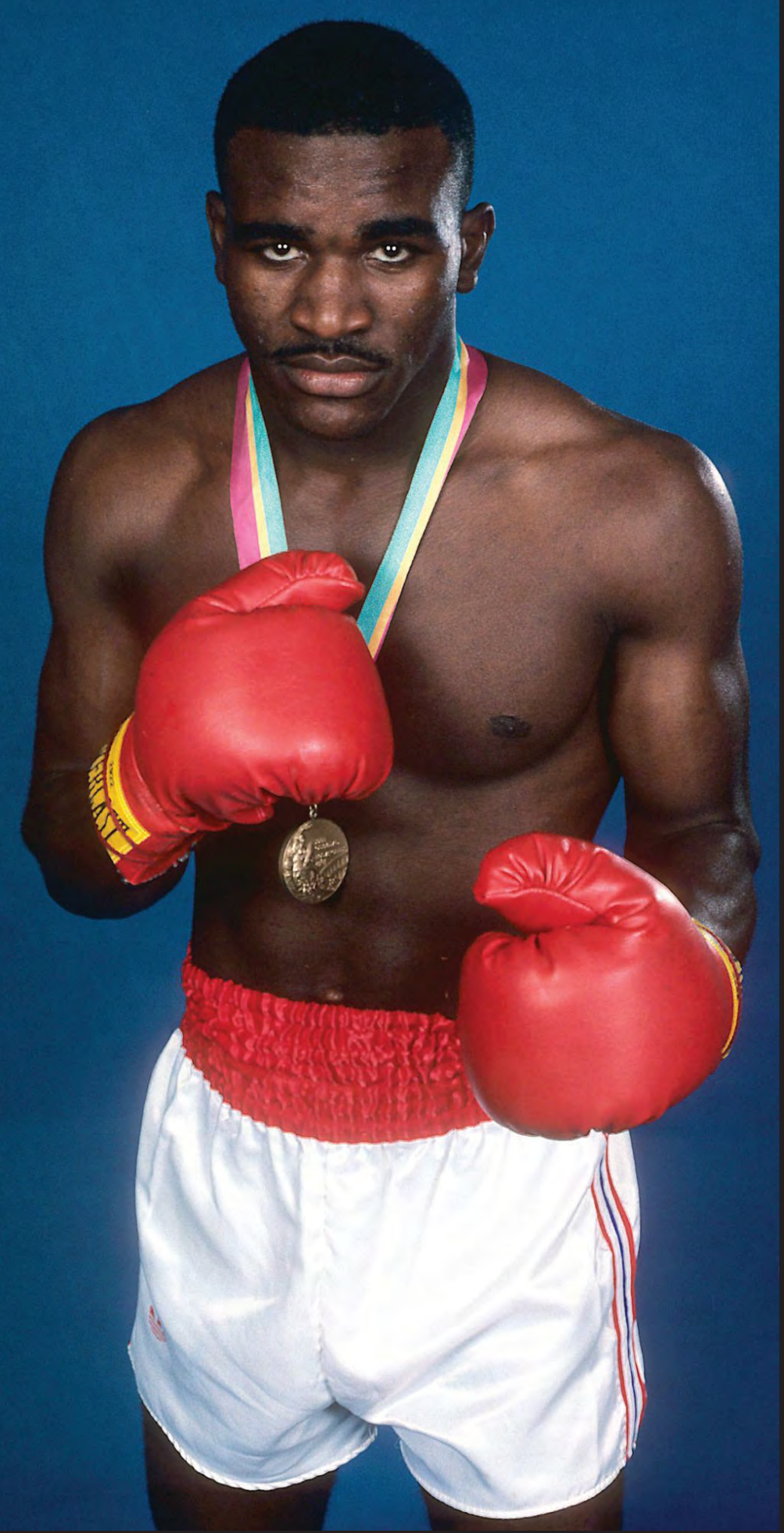
Record: 40-4-1 (17 KOs)

Major titles: RING lightweight (won it in 1989), IBF lightweight (1989-92), WBC lightweight (1989-92), WBA lightweight (1990-92), IBF junior welterweight (1992-93), WBC welterweight (1993-97), WBA junior middleweight (1995).

Key victories: Roger Mayweather (big early test) UD, 1987; Greg Haugen (first title) UD, 1989; Jose Luis Ramirez (added WBC belt in rematch) UD, 1989; Azumah Nelson (title defense) UD, 1990.

Summary: Whitaker was the Floyd Mayweather Jr. of his day … or should we say Mayweather was the Whitaker of his? "Sweet Pea," a gold medalist in the 1984 Olympics, had the kind of ability – a baffling blend of athleticism, speed and skills – that made him virtually untouchable when he was at his best. He dominated the lightweight and welterweight divisions from 1989 to 1997, clearly establishing himself as one of the greatest boxers of all time. Whitaker didn't lose a clear decision until, at a faded 35, he was outpointed by a prime Felix Trinidad in 1999. That was followed by his final fight, in which he broke his clavicle and had to quit against Carlos Bojorquez in 2001. His two other losses and his draw are all disputed, meaning he could've (should've?) finished with a record of 43-2. In 1988, he lost a split decision to Jose Luis Ramirez in a fight most believe he won and later avenged the setback. In 1993, his draw with Julio Cesar Chavez is considered one of the sport's great robberies. And, in 1997, even a close decision loss to a young Oscar De La Hoya was disputed. This is the point: Whitaker was almost unbeatable.





NO. 4
EVANDER HOLYFIELD

Birthplace: Atmore, Ala.

Active: 1984-2011

Record: 44-10-2 (29 KOs)

Major titles: WBA cruiserweight (1986-88), IBF cruiserweight (1987-88), WBC cruiserweight (1988), IBF/WBA/WBC heavyweight (1990-92), IBF/WBA heavyweight (1993-94), WBA heavyweight 1996-99, IBF heavyweight (1997-99), WBA heavyweight (2000-01).

Key victories: Dwight Muhammad Qawi (cruiserweight title) SD, 1986; James Tillis (heavyweight debut) TKO 5, 1988; Buster Douglas (unified title) KO 3, 1990; George Foreman (first title defense) UD, 1991; Larry Holmes (title defense) UD, 1992; Riddick Bowe (regained two titles) MD, 1993; Mike Tyson (regained title) TKO 11, 1996; Tyson (ear bite fight) DQ 3, 1997; Michael Moorer (regained title), TKO 8, 1997; John Ruiz (won title for final time) UD, 2000.

Summary: Imagine if Holyfield had been a natural heavyweight? Scary. As it was, the fierce onetime cruiserweight king became the only heavyweight to win a major title four times. And he generally competed at a size (and later age) disadvantage. Holyfield was the greatest cruiserweight ever but was just getting started. He blew out Buster Douglas to win the unified heavyweight title in 1990 and successfully defended three times. Then came his first fight against the talented and much bigger Riddick Bowe. Holyfield lost his title in the first of three meetings, regained it and lost it again in a classic series. "The Real Deal" was hardly finished as his greatest foil still lay ahead. Holyfield was a 25-1 underdog when he faced a resurgent Mike Tyson but shocked the world by scoring an 11th-round knockout. The rematch was the unforgettable "Bite Fight." After that came Lennox Lewis, another gifted and much bigger foe who went 1-0-1 in competitive fights against Holyfield, who was past his prime at 36 and 37. Holyfield would fight until he was almost 50 but his legacy was secure: Truly great.

NO. 5
MARVIN HAGLER

Birthplace: Newark, N.J.

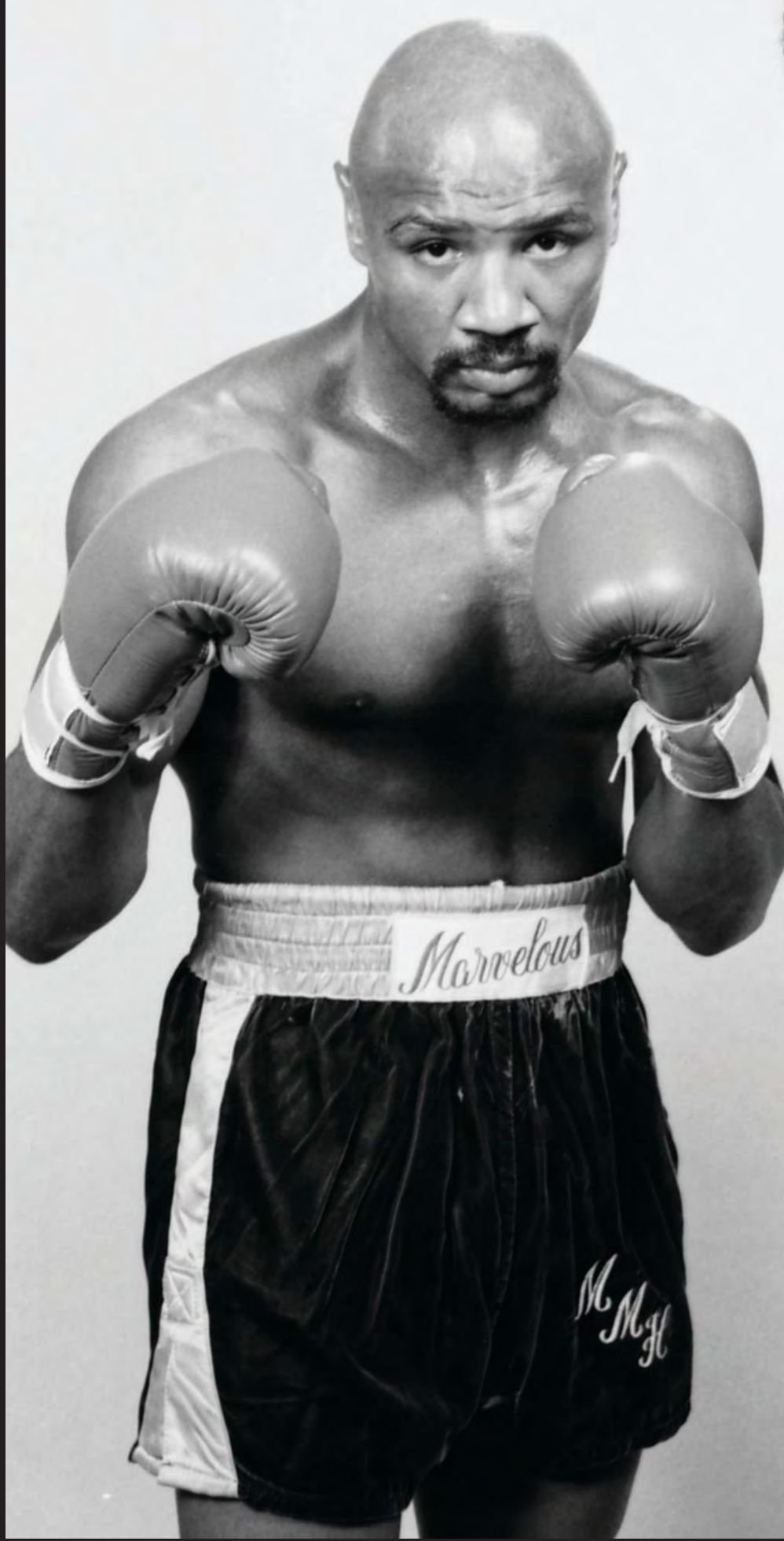
Active: 1973-87

Record: 62-3-2 (52 KOs)

Major titles: RING/WBA/WBC middleweight (1980-1987), IBF middleweight (1983-87).

Key victories: Alan Minter (first titles) TKO 3, 1980; Vito Antuofermo (rematch of disputed draw) TKO 4, 1981; Roberto Duran (title defense) UD, 1983; Thomas Hearns (classic title defense) TKO 3, 1985; John Mugabi (final victory) KO 11, 1986.

Summary: It took Hagler a while to reach the pinnacle of the sport but he made quite an impression once he got there. "Marvelous" Marvin had it all – speed, ability, power and one of the greatest chins in history – but also had to endure some bad luck. He had been a pro for seven years and on the wrong end of more than one bad decision when he finally and emphatically stopped Alan Minter to win the middleweight championship in 1980. He would hold onto it for seven remarkable years, which included a narrow victory over Roberto Duran in 1983 and a classic three-round brawl with Thomas Hearns in 1985 that sealed his reputation as the greatest 160-pounder of the era. At that point, Hagler was as feared as any fighter in the world. Then, in an instant, he was gone. Sugar Ray Leonard stunned Hagler and the boxing world in 1987 by coming out of retirement to score a split-decision upset in the RING Fight of the Year. Hagler, disgusted with what he thought was another unjust decision, never fought again. But by that time everyone knew exactly how great Hagler was.



NO. 6
JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

Birthplace: Ciudad Obregon, Sonora, Mexico

Active: 1980-2005

Record: 107-6-2 (86 KOs)

Major titles: WBC junior lightweight (1984-87); WBA lightweight (1987-89); RING/WBC lightweight (1988-89); WBC junior welterweight (1989-94); IBF junior welterweight (1990-91); WBC junior welterweight (1994-96).

Key victories: Mario Martinez (first title) TKO 8, 1984; Roger Mayweather (second title defense) TKO 2, 1985; Juan Laporte (title defense) UD, 1986; Edwin Rosario (second title) TKO 11, 1987; Jose Luis Ramirez (unification) TD, 1988; Meldrick Taylor (classic rally) TKO 12, 1990; Hector Camacho (title defense) UD, 1992; Greg Haugen (title defense) TKO 5, 1993.

Summary: Chavez became perhaps the most popular fighter in the history of Mexico with undeniable ability and a magnetic personality that touched millions. His style wasn't complicated. He walked down opponents like a big cat does its prey, using as his signature weapons a brutal and relentless body attack and the ability to take his foes' best punches. The formula was profoundly successful. Chavez started his career 87-0 and was 89-0-1 before finally losing to Frankie Randall in 1994, a setback he avenged twice. And there were a number of memorable victories along the way. That includes the fight that defines him if any does, his last-second knockout of Meldrick Taylor in a fight he was losing on two of three cards. J.C.'s fighting spirit was never more evident. Chavez had mixed results as he began to age but was always a favorite of fans, who never, ever lost faith in him or their love for him. A passing of the torch took place in 1996, when a young Mexican-American star stopped the great man in four rounds and it was downhill from there. Still, to this day, fans swoon when they see their favorite son.

NO. 7
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

Birthplace: Grand Rapids, Mich.

Active: 1996-2015

Record: 49-0 (26 KOs)

Major titles: WBC junior lightweight (1998-2002), RING lightweight (2002-04), WBC lightweight (2002-04), WBC junior welterweight (2005), IBF welterweight (2006), RING welterweight (2006-08), WBC welterweight (2006-08), WBC junior middleweight (2007), WBC welterweight (2011-15), RING welterweight (2013-15), WBA junior middleweight (2012-16), RING junior middleweight (2013-15), WBC junior middleweight (2013-15), WBA welterweight (2014-16), WBO welterweight (2015).

Key victories: Genaro Hernandez (first title) TKO 8, 1998; Diego Corrales (title defense) TKO 10, 2001; Jose Luis Castillo (close fight) UD, 2002; Castillo (rematch) UD, 2002; Arturo Gatti TKO 6, 2005; Zab Judah UD, 2006; Oscar De La Hoya (gained superstar status) SD, 2007; Canelo Alvarez (big event) MD, 2013; Manny Pacquiao (richest fight ever) UD, 2015.

Summary: Love him or hate him, you have to acknowledge Mayweather's once-in-a-generation ability. "Pretty Boy"-turned-"Money" barely lost a round, let alone a fight in a perfect 49-0 career. Jose Luis Castillo came the closest to beating Mayweather in their first meeting, in 2002, but fell short and no one really pushed him after that. Mayweather was primarily a defensive fighter – doing just enough to win, particularly later in his career – but it's arguable that nobody in the history of boxing was more difficult to hit. And it should be noted that Mayweather took more risks early in his career, allowing him to stop 23 of his first 34 opponents. It also should be noted that Mayweather didn't rely solely on his natural gifts, his speed and athleticism; he has been a focused, hardworking gym rat since he was a toddler in a boxing family. He had everything a fighter needs to succeed except, perhaps, punching power. And it certainly paid off for him. He made in the neighborhood of $700 million in the ring, according to Forbes magazine. We might never see another fighter like Mayweather again.

NO. 8
JAKE LAMOTTA

Birthplace: Bronx, New York

Active: 1941-54

Record: 83-19-4 (30 KOs)

Major titles: World/RING middleweight (1949-51).

Key victories: Sugar Ray Robinson UD, 1943; Marcel Cerdan (won title) TKO 9, 1949; Laurent Dauthuille (title defense) KO 15, 1950;

Summary: We don't know which fact about LaMotta is most remarkable. The fact he has reached 95 even though he took part in many ring wars is mind boggling. The fact he never went down in spite of his aggressive, punishing style makes no sense. He might be the toughest fighter ever. The fact he beat a prime (albeit much smaller) Sugar Ray Robinson once in their six-fight series says a lot about how good he was. And the fact the film about his life – "Raging Bull" – is considered a classic only added to his legend. LaMotta campaigned at a time when boxers sometimes fought every few days; hence his 106 fights in only 13 years. And a stunning percentage of those fights were against the best of the era – Robinson, Fritzie Zivic, Holman Williams, Bob Satterfield, Tony Janiro, Marcel Cerdan. The list goes on. LaMotta lost some, won most but took every opponent to hell and back every time out with his relentless attack and otherworldly durability. He was fortunate when he won his title against the great Cerdan, who had to quit with a shoulder injury. However, LaMotta had already demonstrated his greatness.

NO. 9
MANNY PACQUIAO

Birthplace: Kibawe, Bukidnon, Philippines

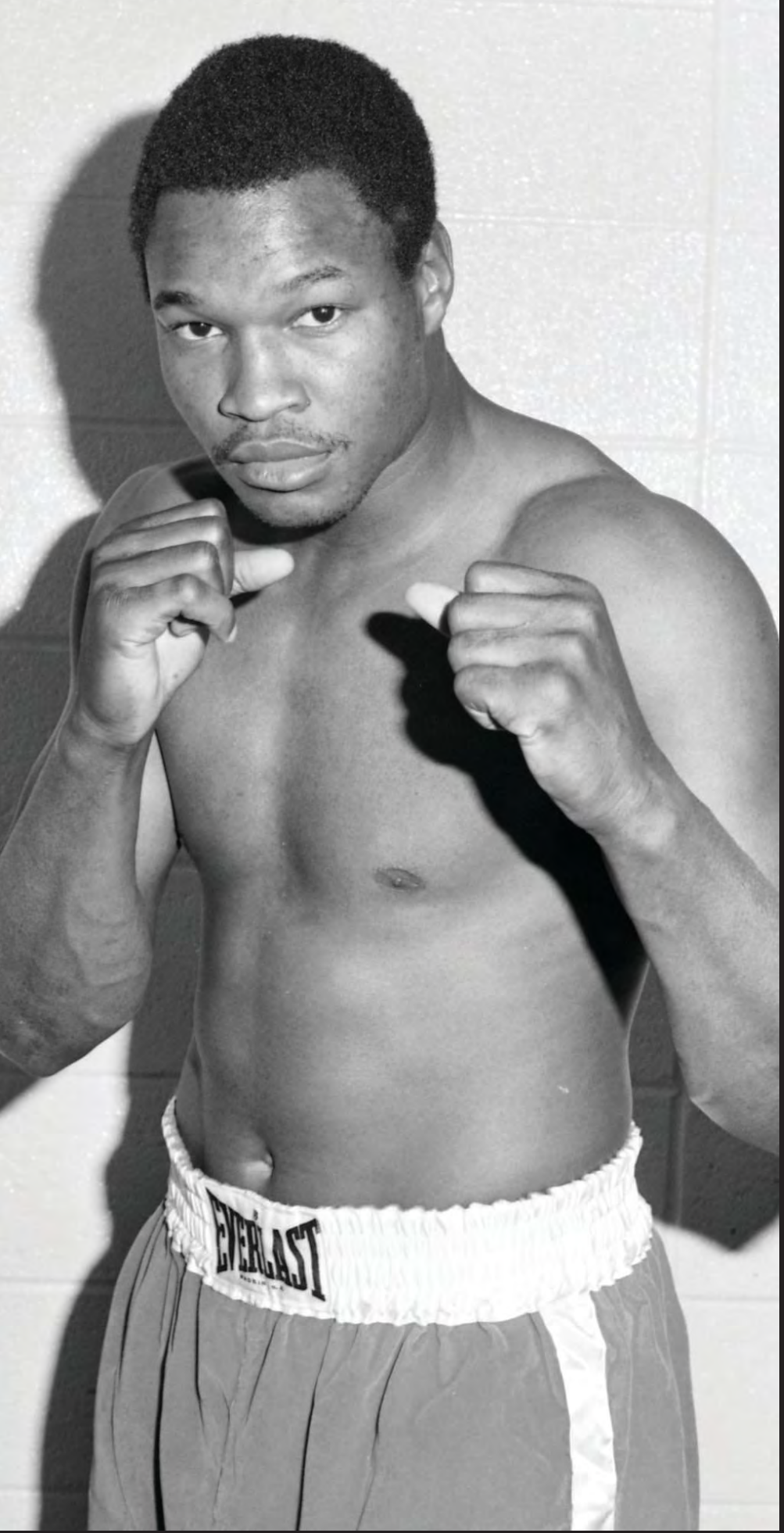
Active: 1995-2016

Record: 58-6-2 (38 KOs)

Major titles: WBC flyweight (1998-99), IBF junior featherweight (2001-03), RING featherweight (2003-05), RING/WBC junior lightweight (2008), WBC lightweight (2008-09), RING junior welterweight (2009-10), WBO welterweight (2009-12), WBC junior middleweight (2010-11), WBO welterweight (2014-15).

Key victories: Chatchai Sasakul (first title) KO 8, 1998; Lehlo Ledwaba (U.S. introduction) TKO 6, 2001; Marco Antonio Barrera (first fight with Mexican trio) TKO 11, 2003; Erik Morales (rematch of loss) TKO 10, 2006; Juan Manuel Marquez (first victory over rival in four-fight series) SD, 2008; Oscar De La Hoya (became superstar) TKO 8, 2008; Ricky Hatton (most devastating KO) KO 2, 2009; Miguel Cotto TKO 12, 2009; Tim Bradley (rematch of loss) UD, 2014.

Summary: Pacquiao probably was no better than the second best fighter of his era – behind only the unbeaten Floyd Mayweather Jr. – but nobody has a more robust resume. "Pacman" won major world titles in an unprecedented eight divisions from flyweight to junior middleweight, almost half of the 17 weight classes in boxing. He had 17 fights against possible future Hall of Famers, going 12-4-1 in those matchups. He had a record of 6-2-1 in his riveting series against the great Mexican trio of Juan Manuel Marquez, Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales, all of whom are future Hall of Famers. And he did it all in dramatic fashion. Pacquiao's one-punch knockout of Ricky Hatton might be the most memorable moment of his long career but it was filled with drama, which captured the imagination of the public and made him a true icon. Pacquiao had his setbacks, most notably a stunning one-punch knockout against Marquez and a one-sided decision against Mayweather in the richest fight ever. Nevertheless, his popularity never seemed to wane. That's a tribute to the indelible impression he has made on boxing.



NO. 10
LARRY HOLMES

Birthplace: Cuthbert, Ga.

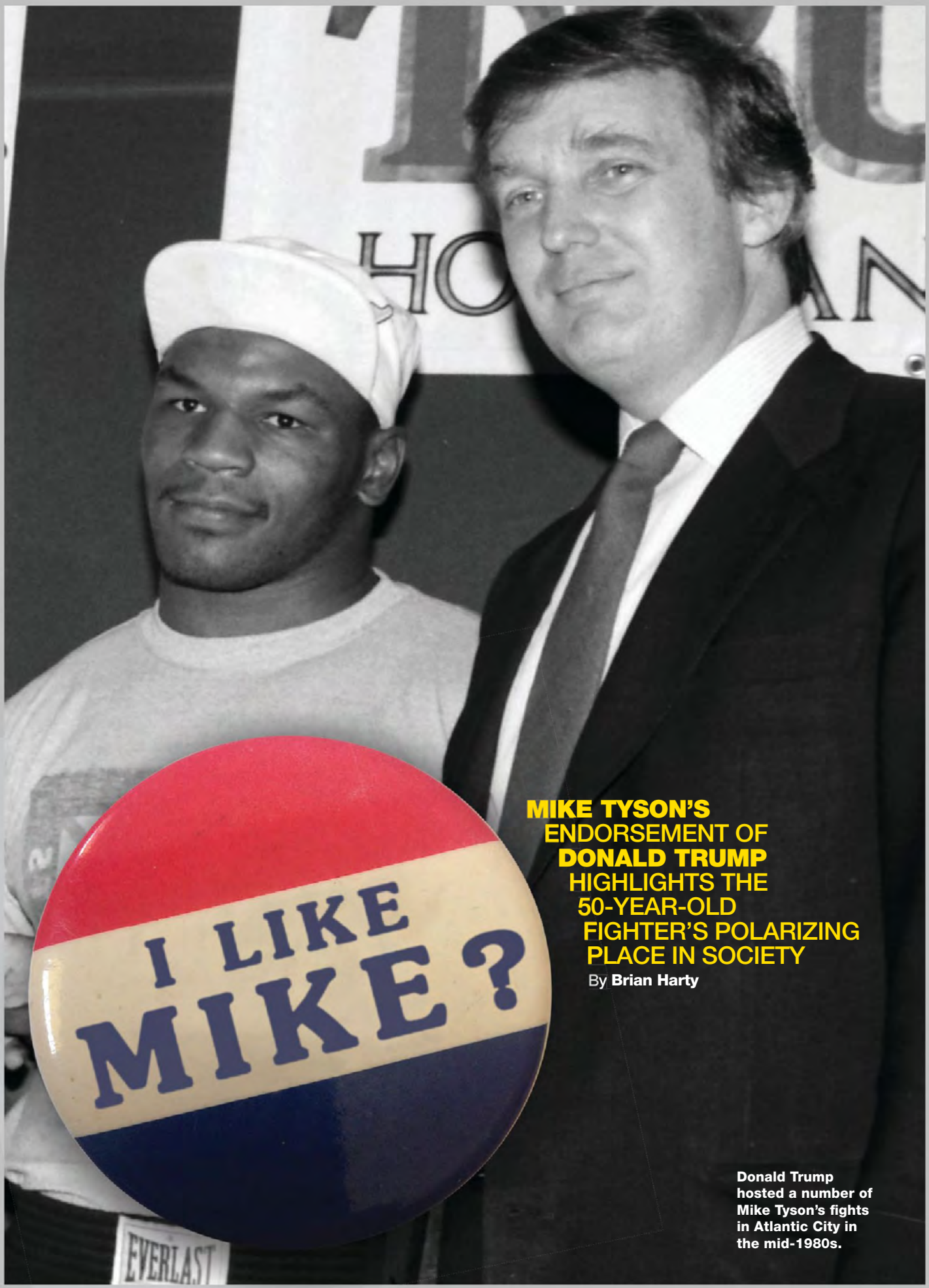
Active: 1973-2002

Record: 69-6, 44 KOs

Major titles: WBC heavyweight (1978-83), RING (1980-85), IBF (1983-85)

Key victories: Earnie Shavers (title eliminator) UD, 1978; Ken Norton (first title) SD, 1978; Muhammad Ali (Ali's second to last fight) TKO 10, 1980; Gerry Cooney (huge event) TKO 13, 1982; James Smith (after Holmes was awarded his second title) TKO 12, 1984.

Summary: Holmes started as one of Muhammad Ali's sparring partners and ultimately became his successor, building a legacy of his own as one of the greatest heavyweights of all time. Holmes used his pile-driving jab, refined all-around ability and underappreciated fighting spirit to dominate the division for seven full years, including a total of 20 successful title defenses against the best heavyweights of the day. The run started with a classic split-decision nod over fellow Hall of Famer Ken Norton in 1978 and ended with two controversial decision losses to another Hall of Famer, Michael Spinks, in 1985 and 1986, when Holmes was 35 and 36. That was followed by the only knockout loss of his career, a fourth-round TKO against a prime Mike Tyson in 1988. Holmes fought twice more for the heavyweight championship, losing decisions to Evander Holyfield in 1992 and Oliver McCall in 1995, but would never again reach the heights of his historic run through the heavyweight division. He ended his three-decade career with a victory over Eric "Butterbean" Esch at the age of 52. The fact he went out a winner was appropriate given his profound success.



MIKE TYSON'S ENDORSEMENT OF DONALD TRUMP HIGHLIGHTS THE 50-YEAR-OLD FIGHTER'S POLARIZING PLACE IN SOCIETY

By **Brian Harty**

Donald Trump hosted a number of Mike Tyson's fights in Atlantic City in the mid-1980s.

Imagine you are running for public office, say, President of the United States, and your campaign manager says, "Mike Tyson endorsed you." Would that make you happy or worried?

"Mike Tyson endorsed me," then-presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump told a crowd in Indianapolis on April 27 and he was clearly not unhappy about it. "I love it. He sent out a tweet. Mike. Iron Mike. You know, all the tough guys endorse me. I like that, OK? ... We need toughness now."

The existence of that particular tweet was never proven but Tyson's support for Trump was real; he'd expressed it in interviews before. Fellow candidate Ted Cruz denounced the association, as did legions of Twitterverse residents after a rumor surfaced on June 28 that Tyson would be speaking at the Republican National Convention in July. In response to that, Trump was quick to tweet, "The media makes everything up!" Sarah Huckabee Sanders, daughter of former rival Mike Huckabee turned Trump supporter, reacted tactfully by saying Trump wants the endorsement of every American.

Sometimes being linked to Tyson is toxic, sometimes it's strategic, it seems.

Trump followers or not, many people could agree on "tough" as an adjective for Tyson. Others might choose very differently, maybe "vulnerable" or "fractured." Some perceive honesty and others see opportunism in Tyson, some a tragedy and others a comeback. Judging from the social media reaction to the convention rumor, "rapist" is the connection a lot of people make.

Trump said, "All the tough guys support me."

Boxing fans might summon "Iron Mike" at his peak, a sockless Medusa to those he faced, or the fallen Mike fumbling for his mouthguard in Tokyo as Jim Lampley produced the most obvious and most iconic sentence of his career: "Mike Tyson has been knocked out." Some will think of Evander Holyfield while casual observers who have forgotten that name will just think of his ear. Everyone will think "tattoo" and everyone, in one way or another, will think "fighter."

On June 30, Tyson turned 50. With all that has happened surrounding him it's remarkable he isn't older, but remember that long before his one-man stage play "Undisputed Truth," in between prison and an already historic career, as he struggled to recover from Buster Douglas' punches during a 10-count that probably only he doesn't remember, Tyson was 4½ months shy of his 24th birthday.

There's not much that hasn't been said about Tyson's journey and the suffering inflicted on him and by him but that's largely an exploit-by-exploit fascination. His endorsement of Trump, on the other hand, is a lens. It takes the entire spectrum of his life, focuses it into an impression and drops it into a box on a ballot, where it becomes one ingredient of a choice. Its influence comes down to something very basic.

"The aspect of the endorsement that usually matters most is the mere liking for the endorser," said Richard Petty, a professor of psychology at Ohio State University who specializes in the behavior of voters. When opinions are in sync, he says – meaning you like or dislike both the candidate and the endorser – you feel vindicated and even more opinionated. When you like one and dislike the other, however, it triggers reflection and can shift your opinion in either direction.

"Which attitude would change is the one that started out being less strong," says Petty.

It's less a weighing of the issues and more a gut response to a person as the sum of their parts, in other words. In modern terms, call it a brand. So imagine you're that candidate again ... Is the "Mike Tyson" brand likable?

His conviction for the rape of

Tyson has had at least one thing in common with the uber-wealthy Trump.

Desiree Washington in 1992 makes that question a non-starter for a lot of people, and justifyably so, says Lampley. But he doesn't think that's what most people see in Tyson at age 50.

"Mike Tyson is very likable for a lot of people," said Lampley. "They think of the guy with the Maori tattoo on his face who says funny things and is so appealingly self-deprecating now in comparison to how he was once presented."

The HBO anchorman first encountered Tyson by way of a short highlight reel manager Bill Cayton sent to every local news station in the country as a way to promote his 19-year-old fighter. It worked like a charm, said Lampley, as sportscasters quickly adopted the dramatic KO footage as filler for their segments. According to him, Tyson did his part but at his own expense.

"Mike understood perfectly how to play the role that was ordained in that structure," said Lampley. "That role, of course, is defined by the phrase 'baddest man on the planet.' And if there's one thing Mike never was, it's the baddest man on the planet. The shy kid on the roof with pigeons, that's Mike Tyson."

The stories of pigeons were intriguing in the early days but did little to change the characterization of Tyson's allure as the thrill of being close to some sort of wild animal. His brief marriage to Robin Givens was often described as "Beauty and the Beast" and the allegations of abuse that surrounded their divorce became obscenely melded to his mystique.

Larry Merchant, who followed Douglas' upset on that 1990 HBO broadcast from Tokyo with a gem of his own ("This makes 'Cinderella' look like a sad story."), recalls that after Tyson had just become the youngest heavyweight champion in history by beating Trevor Berbick in 1986, Muhammad Ali leaned over and said in his ear, "How long can he keep going?" Merchant said it was a recognition of both the vulnerabilies in Tyson's fighting style and the growing pressure of fame, and more than anything a question about whether he was the kind of person who could handle it.

"I had no answer," said Merchant. "The question was the answer."

Thirty years later, just a month after Tyson was a pallbearer at Ali's funeral, Merchant likened the fighter from Brooklyn to Jack Dempsey, a product of his time whose name "transcended his defeats in the ring and outside the ring, which were many."

Trump, who turned 70 two weeks before Tyson turned 50, is also a product of the times, a man whose name transcends his successes and failures, which are many. He is the candidate that had to happen in today's celebrity culture, just as Tyson is in some ways the fighter that had to happen during the white-powdered days of the 1980s. Both understand what it is to adapt and survive, and to a large degree both are successful today because they are very publicly liked and disliked simultaneously.

There is recognition and solidarity in that connection, perhaps just as strong as the fact that their casino/fighter partnership made both of them piles of money in the '80s and '90s. It is, as Petty might say, a mutual endorsement, each reinforcing the other, one brand gravitating to another.

But in the arena of public opinion,

THE RING MAGAZINE

Tyson is the seasoned veteran. He told the New York Post in March, after fights broke out at a Trump rally in Chicago, "Now he knows what it's like when everyone is out to get you. He's probably never known that to this extent."

Both Trump and Tyson seem to have the ability to take that public sentiment and make it work for them, but Tyson's approach is very different: While Trump steers emotions, Tyson sells them. His emotional unburdening has become the foundation of his second life. According to Lampley, that foundation runs deep.

He tells a dreamlike story:

In 2002, when Tyson had just lost to Lennox Lewis and was three fights away from the end of his career, Lampley was assigned to interview Tyson in his dressing room. He was unsettled because he hadn't seen Mike for a long time and had been publicly saying that the fighter's antisocial behavior, the ear, trying to break Frans Botha's arm, testing positive for pot ... they were all attempts to get himself banned from boxing forever. He felt Tyson had a self-destructive urge to go back to the world he knew, "back to the desolation." He'd been told Tyson was angry with him.

He went into the dressing room and found nobody else besides Mike Tyson with an infant on his lap. Lampley said hello, and without looking up Tyson said, "I've missed you."

"I knew at that moment it wasn't me personally he was talking about missing," said Lampley. "I think what he was saying was that he missed the credibility he had once had, the preeminence he had once had ... and all the trappings that had been a part of the earlier part of his career, and I had been a part of that. ... This was still the same sweet kid I'd met when he was 19. This was still the same teenage boy who used to hide on the roof with his pigeons. That part of Mike Tyson was never going to be ripped away."

In Lampley's eyes, the one-man show has at last given Tyson the opportunity to play himself.

Of course, as with any celebrity, Tyson's image is managed with a political sense for language. It would be unfair to attribute this to his own hand since it's the job of others to write biographies, but it's worth noting that in the bio on the website linked to his Twitter account there is no mention of the name Desiree Washington. And the time involving Tyson's imprisonment is boiled down to this: "A series of personal and professional setbacks took Mike out of the ring for five years." (Nor is there any mention of Trump's public proposal at the time that Tyson be spared a prison term and subsequent poverty. Instead, said Trump, a portion of the "tremendous amount of money" he'd make from fighting Holyfield should be used to help rape victims.)

Tyson has evolved from a feared to a respected figure for some.

Regarding the Holyfield rematch that eventually came to pass, the bio notes that Tyson was "disqualified from the match and barred from boxing for a year" but offers no explanation of why. The text you'll see on your browser tab when visiting the website, meanwhile, reads "Bite Into the Boxing World of Mike Tyson."

Back in the early 2000s, Tyson probably more than anyone wouldn't have bet on that world existing at all. He was taking listless exhibition fights to pay bills. He was getting arrested for drugs and going to rehab. He told USA Today, "My entire life has been a waste."

And then suddenly, in 2008, there was a documentary bearing his name. There were portraits of a weathered Tyson looking sideways at the camera while the tattoo was featured like a battle wound, as if to finally say, "You want to look at it? Here it is." Whether by opportunity or exhaustion, a crack had opened, the public's interest was rekindled and out came pouring the movie roles, the stage show, the book ...

According the Tyson, by the way, he originally wanted his face to be covered with hearts but the tattoo artist refused.

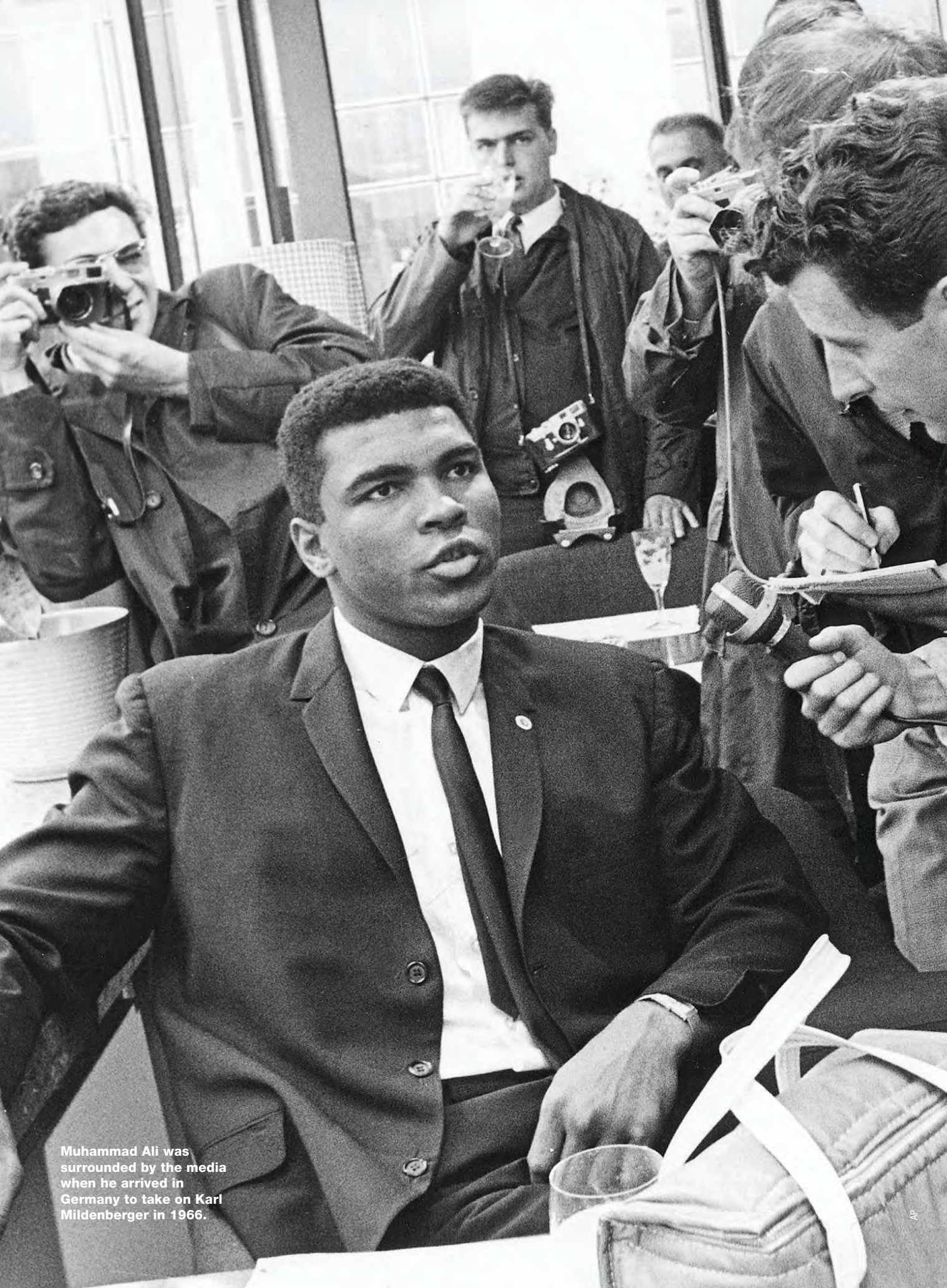
"At the end of the day, the single most galvanizing observation you can make about Mike Tyson is that he's a survivor," said Lampley, "and he has proven his survival capabilities in the face of experiences so overwhelming and so bizarre that most of us would drown. His ability to stay afloat is quite amazing."

Merchant agreed but left the door open for the old Mike as well.

"As admirable as his public living of the examined life and his attempts to be a better guy are ... I'm not sure that's the particular reason that he's still Tyson. But hopefully that has contributed to the fact that he's gone from a feared character into a respected, if not beloved public character."

As to which version Trump might be more interested in sharing his stump with, Merchant was what Tyson, in his familiar voice, might describe as a little more "pithy":

"Maybe Donald Trump thinks, in all of his wisdom about how the world works and how the government works, maybe he wants to make Mike Tyson Secretary of Defense." RING



Muhammad Ali was surrounded by the media when he arrived in Germany to take on Karl Mildenberger in 1966.

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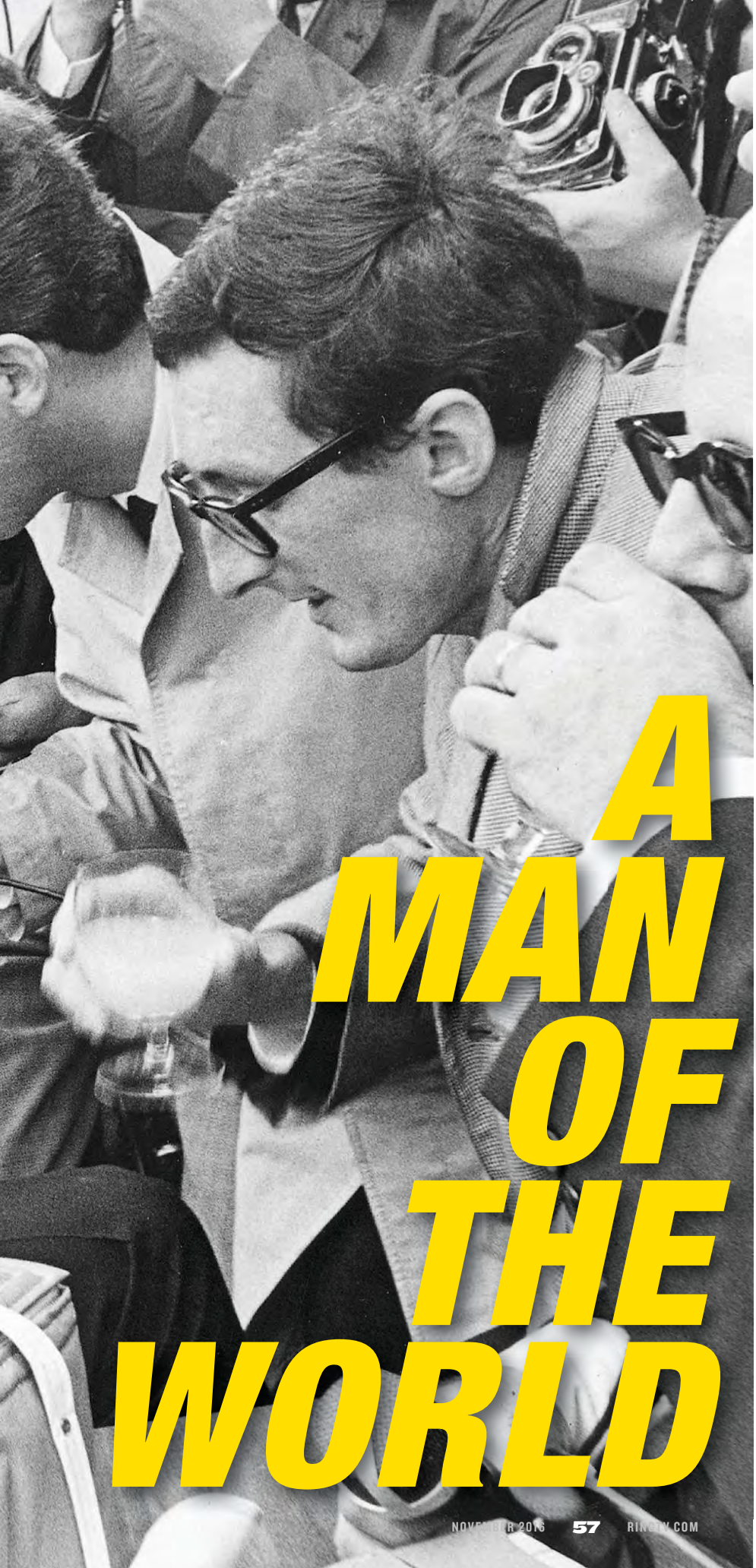


A MAN OF THE WORLD

MUHAMMAD ALI TOUCHED PEOPLE IN A PROFOUND WAY FAR BEYOND HIS COUNTRY'S BORDERS

By **Tom Gray**

The heavyweight champion of the world.

Let's take the title literally for a moment. There have been countless heavyweights and dozens of champions, but how many of them have been able to transcend national and cultural boundaries? How many have been able to fuse the world of sports with the turbulence of the times to emerge as a never-to-be-forgotten and cherished global figure?

Muhammad Ali's passing on June 3, 2016, at the age of 74, reminded everyone just how much the former three-time heavyweight champion of the world meant to people of every race, creed and color. It is an impossible task to capsulize all of the reasons this is the case but it's a story that goes back over half a century and one could be forgiven for believing that it was preordained.

"First, you have to consider the medium," said Ali's biographer and close friend, Thomas Hauser. "Ali came along in 1960, just as television was growing out of its infancy. For the first time, television was learning not just how to transmit very basic things but how to identify and build stories. Then, of course, satellite technology came in.

"When Ali won gold at the Rome Olympics in 1960, ABC television had to drive the tape to the airport, put it on a plane, have someone pick it up and bring it back to the studio. Five years later, you could see things like that instantaneously. This enabled Ali's global reach."

Cassius Clay, as he was known at

Ali was welcomed with a parade upon his arrival in Seoul, South Korea in 1976.

AP

the time, was merely a gifted fighter for 3½ years. Then, following his dramatic title victory over Sonny Liston on Feb. 25, 1964, his face appeared on the front pages as much as it did the sports pages. Clay officially announced his conversion to Islam, changed his name to Muhammad Ali, and just as his skills reached the level of otherworldly he made a conscientious decision that cost him his athletic prime.

Mark Naison is a professor of African-American studies and history at Fordham University in New York and his knowledge of Ali's downtime is extensive.

"Between 1964 and 1967, Ali was in limbo between being an incredibly appealing boxer and a somewhat controversial racial figure," Naison said. "But when he resisted the draft, that's when he became larger than life to an entire generation of young people, including whites, who had also resisted the Vietnam War. This gave him an incredibly broad-based appeal.

"He had the glamour, the charisma and the controversy but the courageous decision to give up his title was something else. This was at a time when a lot of people I knew were going to jail or moving to Canada to avoid being drafted. There were anti-war demonstrations all over Europe, in South America, in Japan, and in many ways Ali became the most recognizable symbol of the anti-war movement."

Ali was a pariah in his home country. Following his famous "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong" remark in early 1966, the heavyweight champion of the world was forced to defend his title outside America on four consecutive occasions. He beat George Chuvalo in Canada and Karl Mildenberger in Germany that year. Sandwiched between those defenses were two successful U.K. assignments against Henry Cooper and Brian London.

"He was actually hated in huge chunks of the United States because of his stance on the Vietnam War," said Hall of Fame boxing writer Colin Hart. "In Britain, however, we believed in what he said because our prime minister at that time, Harold Wilson, kept us out of that war. Virtually nobody held the draft controversy against Ali because we believed he was right.

"We learned to love him. Why? Because Ali was the most charismatic sportsman of all time and had people eating out of his bloody hand. He was very good-looking so the women loved him even though they didn't know a left hook from a coat hook. Following the Cooper rematch in 1966, he appeared on the Eamonn Andrews TV show and that changed people's perceptions of him. He was so funny, so witty and so lovable that attitudes towards him literally changed overnight."

Ali was stripped of his title in April 1967 and it would be 7½ years before he regained it. The Rumble in the Jungle, on Oct. 30, 1974, is remembered for Ali's sensational eighth-round knockout of George Foreman and his rope-a-dope strategy but the location of that contest had enormous significance.

"It was the first heavyweight championship fight to take place in Africa and that was Ali's way of marking his sense of racial pride," Naison said. "People of African descent were now a central part of the world of sports, the world of politics and the world of media.

"In Africa, where you have all these authoritarian regimes and dictatorships, Ali was seen as a model for people who wanted their own freedom. Most of Africa was living under European colonialism for close to 100 years before the independence movement of the '50s and '60s. Now here is this African-American who stood up to the most powerful forces in his country and survived. It's a dual appeal: He's a symbol of freedom for all people but particularly to people of African descent, given their own history."

Eight months after regaining the title from Foreman, Ali would take on Joe Bugner. The pair had met in Las Vegas two years earlier and Bugner, who was criminally underrated throughout his own career, gave a good account of himself in a 12-round non-title bout that he lost on points.

The rematch would take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a Muslim country, where Ali was idolized. However, the champion's immense popularity took a sinister turn when one overly enthusiastic fan made contact with his opponent.

ON THE ROAD

More than a quarter of Muhammad Ali's fights took place outside his native United States, which exposed him to people around the world. Here are his 16 fights on foreign soil, all but one of which Ali won.

LONDON
vs. HENRY COOPER
Wembley Stadium, June 18, 1963
TKO 5

TORONTO
vs. GEORGE CHUVALO
Maple Leaf Gardens,
March 29, 1966
UD 15

LONDON
vs. COOPER
Arsenal Football Stadium,
May 21, 1966
TKO 6

LONDON
vs. BRIAN LONDON
Earls Court Arena, Aug. 6, 1966
KO 3

FRANKFURT, GERMANY
vs. KARL MILDENBERGER
Waldstadion/Radrennbahn,
Sept. 10, 1966
TKO 12

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND
vs. JUERGEN BLIN
Hallenstadion, Dec. 26, 1971
KO 7

TOKYO
vs. MAC FOSTER
Nippon Budokan, April 1, 1972
UD 15

VANCOUVER, CANADA
CHUVALO
Pacific Coliseum, May 1, 1972
UD 12

DUBLIN, IRELAND
vs. ALVIN BLUE LEWIS
Croke Park, July 19, 1972
TKO 11

JAKARTA, INDONESIA
vs. RUDI LUBBERS
Bung Karno Stadium,
Oct. 20, 1973
UD 12

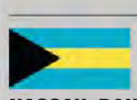
KINSHASA, ZAIRE
(NOW CONGO)
vs. GEORGE FOREMAN
Stade du 20 Mai, Oct. 30, 1974
KO 8

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
vs. JOE BUGNER
Merdeka Stadium, June 30, 1975
UD 15

MANILA, PHILIPPINES
vs. JOE FRAZIER
Araneta Coliseum, Oct. 1, 1975
TKO 14

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO
JEAN-PIERRE COOPMAN
Coliseo Roberto Clemente,
Feb. 20, 1976
KO 5

MUNICH, GERMANY
RICHARD DUNN
Olympiahalle, May 24, 1976
TKO 5



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Queen Elizabeth Sports Centre,
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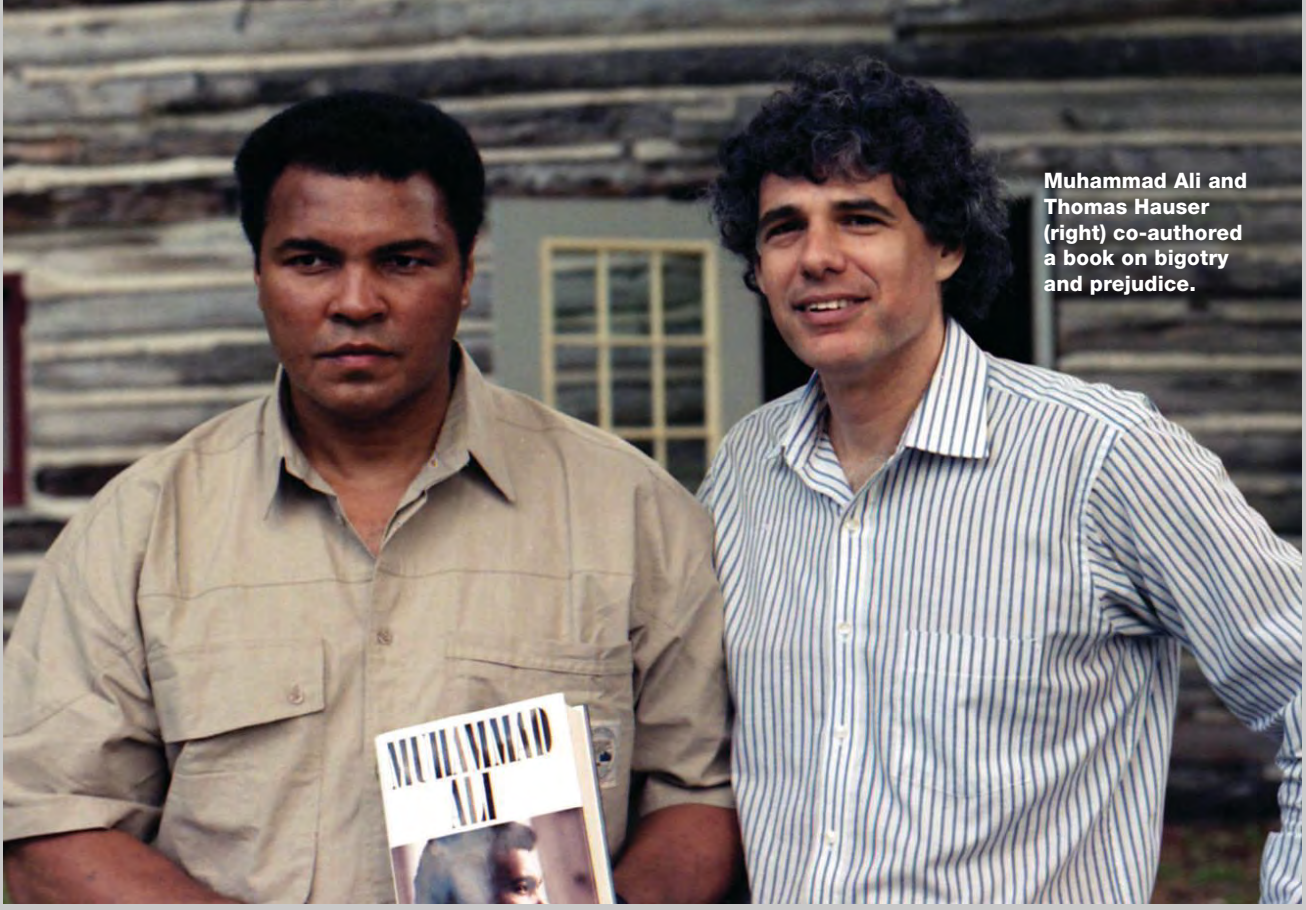


Muhammad Ali and Thomas Hauser (right) co-authored a book on bigotry and prejudice.

'THEY LOOK LIKE THEY'RE HAPPY TOGETHER'

A BRIEF ENCOUNTER REVEALED MUHAMMAD ALI'S INNATE HUMANITY

By Thomas Hauser

In 1996, Muhammad Ali and I coauthored a short book about bigotry and prejudice that was keyed to religious and racial divisions. To spread the message, we visited schools in a half dozen cities across the country, talking with students about the need for tolerance and understanding. In February 1997, our journey brought us to Boston.

Muhammad and I had talked on several occasions about gay rights. I don't know how his views evolved in later years. In the mid-1990s, he believed that a gay lifestyle was at odds with the Quran.

Ali and I were staying at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Boston. As we got out of the limousine that had taken us around the city, the customary crowd gathered. Then I heard the unexpected.

"Omigod! It's Tom Hauser."

The person who blurted out those words was Elizabeth Swados, a gifted playwright, director and author who I'd known in the early 1980s. Liz was with a friend, a woman named Roz Lichter. Muhammad signed autographs outside the hotel for a while. Then we went inside and invited Liz and Roz to join us.

I don't remember much about the conversation that the four of us had. I remember the aftermath clearly. It was obvious that Liz and Roz were coupled. After they left, Muhammad turned to me and asked, "They're lesbians, aren't they?"

"I assume so," I said.

A smile crossed Muhammad's face, the smile that the whole world fell in love with.

"They look like they're happy together," he told me.

The thought that Liz and Roz (who he'd never met before and would never meet again) were happy pleased Muhammad. Ali wanted people to be happy. It was one of the reasons he gave as much of himself as he did. He loved the idea that, by giving someone a few seconds of his time, he could make that person happy.

I thought about that afternoon in Boston earlier this year when I read that Elizabeth Swados had died of complications stemming from esophageal cancer. The tributes were led by her wife, Roz Lichter.

Her wife!

That couldn't have happened two decades ago when Muhammad and Liz met.

I thought about it again on the morning of June 12 when, two days after Muhammad Ali was buried, I awoke to news of the horrifying mass murder at a gay nightclub in Orlando.

"They look like they're happy together."

What is it about that idea that the haters don't understand? ★

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book ("Muhammad Ali: a Tribute to the Greatest") has been published by Pegasus Books in the United States and by Harper U.K. in Great Britain.

THE RING MAGAZINE; AP

"We received a death threat at the hotel and handed it over to the police," said Bugner, who was advised of the possible repercussions if he were to dethrone the great Ali. "After that, on the day of the fight, there were 200 Marines stationed at the stadium with telescopic rifles. When I saw all of that security I felt pretty safe but then I got to thinking, 'It only takes one bullet to kill me.'

"The fight took place at 10:30 in the morning, so I thought maybe the crowd won't be that big. I should have known better because when we got the stadium, there were 40,000 people there and 200 million watched the fight on closed circuit. Ali had such magical contact with the human race. He was beautiful and when you were near him, he just gave off this incredible magnetism. It didn't matter where he was, people just gravitated to him and that never changed."

Bugner lost a unanimous decision and three months later Ali was globetrotting again. In October 1975, the Philippines was an impoverished country struggling for survival under the Ferdinand Marcos regime. Rebels were fighting in the mountains and hundreds of people were being killed but, remarkably, a third fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier was enough to bring about a temporary ceasefire.

Ali, at this point of his career, was arguably the most famous man on the planet and perpetually in demand. Hart, who covered The Thrilla in Manila from ringside, recalls the champion taking big chances with an obsessed fan base.

"While we were in Manila, there was this terrible outbreak of conjunctivitis and Ali was due to go (on a) walkabout one day," he said. "Ferdie Pacheco, Ali's doctor, warned him not to go anywhere near children who could be infected because that disease is very contagious and if Ali caught it, the fight would have been off. Of course Ali gets to Quezon City, gets out of the limo and the first thing he did was kiss a child.

"He had such an affinity with people and you can't control or manufacture that."

Ali won The Thrilla in Manila in 14 rounds but lost a huge portion of his physical resources in a horrifically violent encounter. He fought on until 1981 and after his professional career had ended, his health declined quite rapidly. But even as that magnificent physique crumbled and that booming voice became a whisper, he still reigned supreme in terms of global popularity.

Ali received a true hero's welcome in Nigeria during his tour of West Africa in 1964.

What Ali could no longer do physically, he did spiritually. Can you think of another athlete or celebrity who could have traveled to Iraq and negotiated the release of 15 American hostages from Saddam Hussein? Ali did that in November 1990, six weeks before the United States began dropping bombs on Jan. 17, 1991.

Later that same year, Hauser traveled to Jakarta, Indonesia, with Ali and recalls the incredible hysteria that surrounded the former champion. "We went to the Grand Mosque and when word got out that Ali was there, literally 200,000 people turned up," he said. "The government had to send in troops to get us out because all of these people had literally surrounded the mosque. They put Ali in a military vehicle and drove him out and I got left behind. Luckily someone recognized me and gave me a ride back to the hotel.

"It was extraordinary, the hold he had over the world. Even the people who didn't like Ali, liked Ali. He stood as a beacon of hope for oppressed people all over the world when he refused to be inducted into the army. He stood up for the proposition where unless you have a very good reason for killing people, war is wrong. Ultimately he became the personification of goodwill and love, and on top of that he was arguably the greatest fighter of all time."

And therein lies the answer as to why Muhammad Ali is essentially a world treasure. As a heavyweight fighter, he could do things that no one else could do and he made boxing look beautiful. Inside that movie star exterior was an engine of warrior courage and heart, attributes that Ali exhibited all over the world, inside and outside of the prize ring.

"There's no one like him," Naison said. "There's no other boxer with that charisma. There's no one who spoke up on political issues the way he did. There's no one who could hold their own with any elected official or talk show host like he did. He was a completely unique figure in terms of how he looked in the ring and how he conducted himself outside of it.

"He's up there with Martin Luther King and Malcolm X as someone who changed race not only in America, but globally, and he did that from the unprecedented posture of being a professional athlete. That has never been done before or since." RING

FIRST THINGS FIRST

CANELO ALVAREZ HAS SOUND REASONS FOR PUTTING OFF A SHOWDOWN WITH **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** BUT COULD'VE HANDLED THAT SITUATION BETTER. NOW HIS FOCUS IS ON THE CHALLENGE AT HAND: **LIAM SMITH**.

By **Ron Borges**

As the boxing world learned once again, to its disappointment, it is one thing to call out a man in a business suit and quite another to challenge him when he's standing in front of you wearing his underwear and leather mittens. That is the mistake Canelo Alvarez made on May 7.

If you are going to hold up a T-shirt that reads "Come And Get It" with your personal logo serving as the "A" in "And" and then wave Gennady Golovkin into the ring and say, "We don't come to play in this sport. I fear no one in this sport. I'll fight (Golovkin) right now. Let's put the gloves on and get in there with him," you better be ready to do it. If you're not, such words come back to bite you and you look like a chump, not a champ. Words, like crow, are not a tasty meal.

That is the PG version of Alvarez's pointed post-fight challenge to Golovkin after knocking out a former junior welterweight with one punch in the sixth round of what was allegedly a middleweight title fight even though both guys weighed five pounds below than the 160-pound limit. Golovkin accepted that challenge but less than two weeks later Alvarez vacated the WBC middleweight title to avoid facing him.

Confused yet? I'm not.

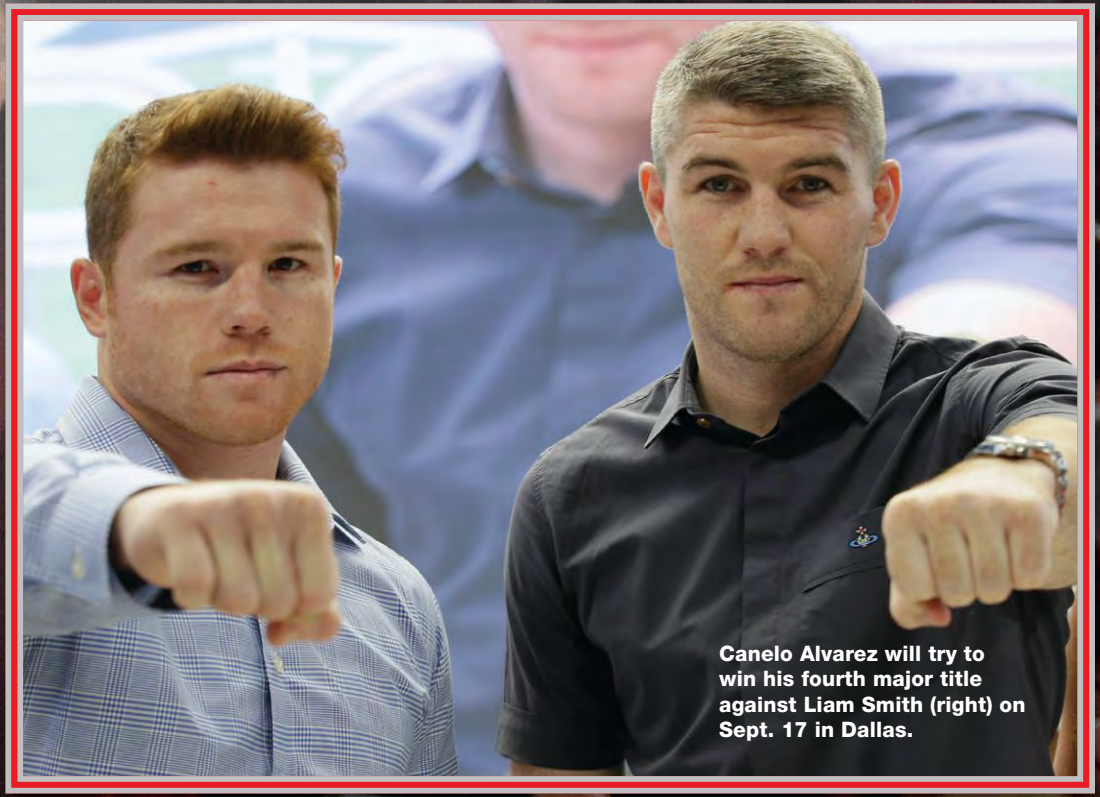
The truth is there are sound business reasons and sound fistic reasons for Alvarez to take the position that he's not quite ready yet to face Golovkin. No shame in that. He's a 26-year-old guy who has never approached the 160-pound limit. Although he beat a faded Miguel Cotto to win the WBC and lineal titles a year ago, they fought at a catchweight of 155 because neither is a true middleweight.

He then defended the title against Amir Khan, who is barely a welterweight, again at 155. So now he's supposed to step up and face the most feared middleweight in the world, a true 160-pounder with proven concussive knockout power, in his first title defense?

I think not. Then again, he should have kept his mouth shut if that was the position he and promoter Oscar De La Hoya were going to take. To do otherwise amounts to chest-beating in an empty room. It may be loud but nobody's listening.

Golovkin, 34, is the best middleweight in the world who is undefeated and owns three sanctioning-body versions of the 160-pound title. The WBO belt presently belongs to Billy Joe Saunders, who couldn't draw flies to a cow barn. So the natural desire of fight fans was to watch the sport's two biggest names: Alvarez, who still has the RING middleweight title, and Golovkin. And Alvarez made it appear it would happen when it wasn't going to.

He could have easily said, "Look, I'm not a middleweight yet. I want one or two fights at 160 to adjust and then



Canelo Alvarez will try to win his fourth major title against Liam Smith (right) on Sept. 17 in Dallas.

NAOKI FUKUDA; INSET: AP

we'll do our thing." Instead he said, "I'll fight anybody" without adding "but you."

Who could blame Alvarez for taking such a position? Certainly not Golovkin, who declined to move up one weight class, to 168, to face Andre Ward and also now refuses to jump two to fight him at light heavyweight, saying he's too big. That's his right and may well have been wise but he can hardly argue now that Alvarez should do what he would not.

In fact, Golovkin (35-0, 32 KO) didn't exactly cover himself in glory when he chose a *welterweight*, Kell Brook, as his next opponent on Sept. 10 at the O2 Arena in London rather than a true middleweight challenger. GGG says he's a middleweight and can't handle the move up but thinks Alvarez should be willing to do it and then chooses to fight a *welterweight*? This leads one to think, "Silencio, amigo!"

And rather than take part in his first true middleweight test, Canelo (47-1-1, 33 KOs) will be facing nondescript WBO junior middleweight titleholder Liam Smith at AT&T Stadium in Dallas on HBO Pay-Per-View.

Those matchups will generate income – GGG-Brook reportedly was sold out in less than an hour and Alvarez will pack AT&T the same way he did Minute Maid Park in Houston a year ago when he drew a reported 31,588 for his fight with James Kirkland – but many fans are less than enthusiastic about the way things played out.

For De La Hoya, the problem is a bit vexing. Alvarez is his major draw and, having been the biggest one in boxing himself for a decade, he understands what that means in the marketplace and for a promoter. To risk Alvarez now, when they can both profit mightily without Golovkin, is not good business.

But De La Hoya is more than just a promoter. As a fighter who also tried to go up to 160 and found he physically wasn't up to it when he faced Bernard Hopkins, a true middleweight, he has a

Canelo won't have the size advantage against Smith that he had against Amir Khan.

AP

unique perspective on what such a move would mean for Alvarez and what it will require. To conclude there's more to it than the public or even Alvarez might know is a fair assessment from someone who walked that road himself.

The point is, Alvarez has sound reasons not to be pushed into a fight he isn't ready for with Golovkin because Alvarez is the No. 1 draw in the sport, not Golovkin, so the fight can only grow with another year of anticipation as GGG likely knocks out two more lesser-lights.

In addition, it's legitimate to argue a career 154-pounder isn't yet ready to face the best middleweight in the world without first testing himself against the strength of a less accomplished middleweight. Just don't say you're ready to do it if you aren't.

As for Golovkin, he continues to say he's the most avoided man in boxing even though he has twice taken step-aside money that allowed guys he said he wanted to fight to avoid him. Now he has opted to face Brook when there are legitimate middleweights worth fighting.

Perhaps that is why both Golovkin and his promoter, Tom Loeffler, took a low-key approach after Alvarez gave up the title to avoid a mandatory defense with a 55-45 purse split. Alvarez issued a statement when it became obvious he was not going to square off with Golovkin next that read: "For the entirety of my career, I have taken the fights that no one wanted because I fear no man. Never has that been more true than today. I will fight GGG, and I will beat GGG, but I will not be forced into the ring by artificial deadlines.

"I am hopeful that by putting aside this ticking clock, the two teams can now negotiate this fight, and GGG and I can get in the ring as soon as possible and give the fans the fight they want to see."

"As soon as possible" is now defined as sometime late next year, which is not as soon as possible but it is as soon as he may feel like doing so. That's his prerogative, just as it

was Golovkin's to avoid Ward, who was always willing to fight him, and instead pursue a smaller man, Floyd Mayweather Jr., when he was never going to fight him nor should have.

What becomes obvious after all the smoke clears is that Alvarez was taking his cue from Golovkin and vice versa: They never intended to fight at weights at which they aren't comfortable.

So be it. That's the business of boxing, which sometimes gets it right, as it likely eventually will with Alvarez vs. Golovkin, but seldom right on time. Understood. Just both stop beating your chests about what you're willing to do when you're really not willing to do it.

If Golovkin *really* wanted to put the pressure on Alvarez he could have said, "I'll fight you at 155, where you're comfortable, just like Cotto and Khan did. Or even at 154 if you'd like since you've never really fought at middleweight." What would Alvarez have done then?

We'll never know.

Conversely, Alvarez could have simply toned down the testosterone after flattening a guy two divisions smaller than he is and simply said, "When I feel like I'm truly a middleweight I'll face Golovkin but I've got to go eat some red meat first." No one could fairly quarrel with that because the truth is Alvarez has faced some difficult opponents already: Mayweather, Erislandy Lara, Austin Trout and Cotto.

Alvarez's handlers didn't want the Lara or Trout fights because their complicated styles would make life difficult and could make Canelo look bad, but Alvarez insisted and found ways to win. One can argue about the split decision over Lara if you want but Alvarez took the match and prevailed when others wanted no part of Lara's evasive, back-foot style, and that's to his credit.

So the idea he's "afraid" of Golovkin defies the facts as well as the mindset of a fighter. Same is true for Golovkin. Fear is not

IMPRESSIVE RESUME

Canelo Alvarez has accomplished a great deal for someone who just turned 26 on July 18. Here are some numbers:

3
Major world titles (WBC junior middleweight, RING middleweight, WBC middleweight)

9-1
Record in world title fights (losing only to Floyd Mayweather Jr.)

5
Knockouts in those title fights

8
Opponents who have won world titles

49
Number of fights

95.9
Winning percentage (one loss and one draw)

Canelo won the RING middleweight title against Miguel Cotto (left).

what's keeping them divided; good business sense and a desire to truly be a middleweight when you first face one is. Had Alvarez simply said that on the night he called Golovkin into the ring at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, he would have been fine.

Instead he called him out and then hung up on him. In the end that very likely won't make a difference because no fans are more forgiving than boxing fans. If they weren't, they would have stopped watching a long time ago.

"There is no denying that Canelo is the biggest star in the sport of boxing," De La Hoya said after his fighter gave up his belt. "He is eager to get in the ring with GGG to show the world that he is also the best pound-for-pound fighter in the sport but we won't negotiate under a forced deadline. Now that the WBC title is off the table, I am hopeful that GGG and his promoter, K2 Promotions, will come to the table in good faith and get this deal done."

Rather than try to insult his way into a showdown (which seldom works, by the way), Golovkin said after the WBC handed him the middleweight title, "Canelo is a warrior, and I know we will still fight because that's the fight the fans want to see."

He conceded Alvarez is boxing's biggest draw and that it was not predicated on whether or not he wore some alphabet group's phony belt. He could be wearing suspenders into the ring and Alvarez would still be the biggest drawing card in boxing. Instead of a public quarrel, after the Khan fight Golovkin's promoter said, "If Canelo was afraid to fight Gennady he wouldn't have called him in the ring. He called him in the ring out of respect and to show he wasn't afraid of Gennady."

Maybe so, but the less said about that moment the better for Canelo Alvarez. He may one day defeat Gennady Golovkin but he lost that round with Golovkin still wearing a sports coat.

CANELO ALVAREZ vs. LIAM SMITH

SEIZING THE MOMENT

LIAM SMITH FACES A DAUNTING CHALLENGE BUT THE DECISION TO FIGHT **CANELO ALVAREZ** WAS A NO-BRAINER

By **Elliot Worsell**

Liam Smith isn't the most popular fighter in the United Kingdom. Nor is he the best junior middleweight in the world. He might not even be the best or most popular boxer in his own family (brothers Paul, Stephen and Callum also box professionally). But, on Sept. 17 at AT&T Stadium in Dallas, this ambitious WBO titlist will, in the name of making big bucks and perhaps a bit of history, pit all he has learned in 24 fights against all Canelo Alvarez has learned in 49.

"Beefy," as he's known, has gone from one extreme to the other. He's gone from a low-key career fought primarily in the shadow of his three better-known brothers to now sharing an event poster with arguably the most famous face in the sport today. Only in boxing, you might say. And it's true. In what other sport can a man go from beating the likes of Predrag Radosevic and Jimmy Kelly to suddenly winding up as Canelo's B-side in a stadium fight? It's a rare, unpredictable beast, this boxing business.

That's not to say Smith has zero chance of winning. All one has to do is look at recent press photos of Smith and Alvarez standing face to face to realize the flame-haired Mexican has finally met his match, at least physically. Smith, from Liverpool, England, is a strong, thickset 27-year-old who uses robustness and physicality, as well as hurtful body shots, to overwhelm opponents. Whether he has the smarts to utilize these perks against someone as proficient as Alvarez is debatable, of course, but he will at least try. Oh, he's a trier. Better yet, his size should mean he'll be able to do more than just *say* he'll try.

Months ago I listened to Amir Khan skirt around the main reason he decided to fight Canelo in May – something to do with money, I think – before enthusiastically detailing the reasons he would shock the world by outboxing him. Admittedly, it all *sounded* good. I even feigned belief he might be able to act on it. But, then, on the night, reality emerged in the form of a single right hand and Khan's decision to leap weight classes in pursuit of cash and a slim chance seemed less of a genius move and more of a misstep. He was knocked out. Badly. With the right hand went some of his luster, his standing, his market value.

Khan made money, though. *Big money*. Ask yourself: Have you ever known a happier loser than Khan that weekend? He made the kind of money Kell Brook, a welterweight, stands to earn from a similarly audacious fight with Gennady Golovkin, a middleweight, in September. Win or lose, it's called the jackpot, baby.

Liam Smith, meanwhile, won't make Khan or Brook money when facing Alvarez, for his name doesn't quite move the needle, but he will unquestionably earn a life-changing, career-high payday. And, as his older brother Paul astutely noted on Twitter in the hours following the Golovkin vs. Brook announcement, "What's a career? Retiring skint (without money)? Do you go to work for your legacy in the office or on (construction) site?" Paul, a dependable pro for 13 years, was fed up with people criticizing Brook for risking it all for a payday – in lieu of his "welterweight legacy" – and wanted them to at least *try* and understand the mind of a prizefighter. He made a salient point, too. Title defenses, especially against the likes of Kevin Bizier and Jo Jo Dan, don't secure a beltholder's future, much less a child's future. Nor, in his brother's case, do title defenses against Predrag Radosevic and Jimmy Kelly. Legacy? Hardly.

"I look at Canelo and don't need any more motivation," Liam Smith said. "I don't look at the odds or papers. This is the biggest fight for me. I can't wait to put on a show and make a name for myself."

Is the Englishman ready for Canelo at this stage? No, probably not. He isn't Khaning it or Kelling it and jumping weight classes but he's jumping levels – at least two or three of them, in fact. That's a concern. Yet, in an era of title-winning free-for-all, Liam Smith is wisely making the most of his moment in the sun, which is to say he's refusing to defend his WBO strap in meaningless fights in favor of putting it to far better use. Now he's going to make a lot of money fighting one of the biggest names in the sport, before, they hope, a crowd of 80,000 people. And, you never know, he could even win. RING

MEET LIAM SMITH

Smith turned pro on Oct. 10, 2008. Exactly seven years later, on Oct. 10, 2015, he won the WBO junior middleweight title with a sixth-round KO of John Thompson.

All four Smith brothers have won British titles, Paul and Callum at super middleweight, Stephen at featherweight and Liam at junior middleweight.

Liam believes Callum is the best of the bunch. "He's got a bit of all of us," he says.

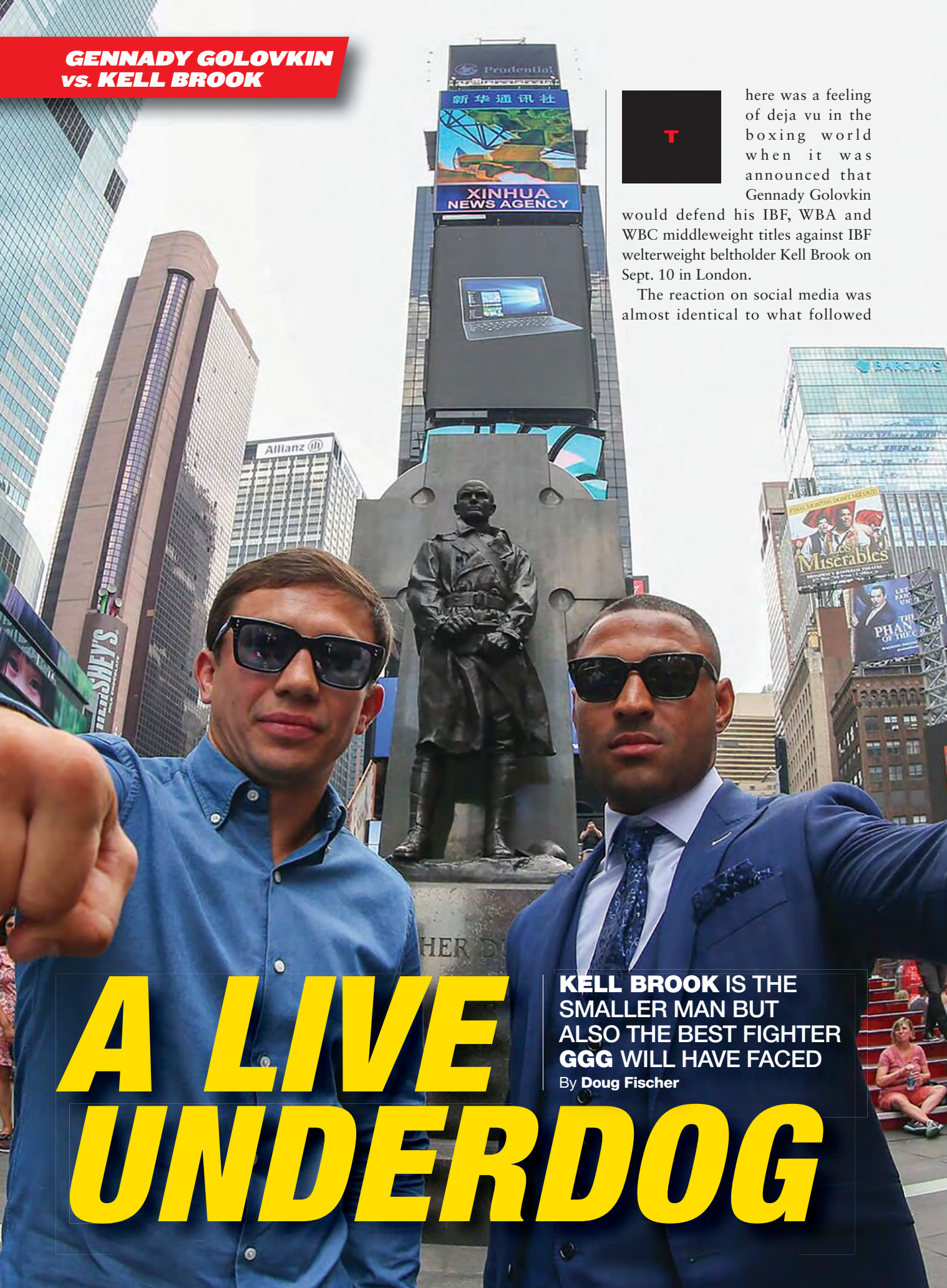
Liam plays center-forward for local soccer teams every Saturday and Sunday – even up until fight week – but he has been sidelined ahead of his fight with Canelo Alvarez.

Older brothers Paul and Stephen have both moved out of the family home in Liverpool, England, but Liam and Callum have yet to flee the nest.

Liam is the only Smith brother who ever found himself in trouble away from the boxing gym. According to his mother, Margaret, he was the "rogue," the "streetwise one."

Liam Smith will be the one who enters the ring with a major belt.

GENNADY GOLOVKIN vs. KELL BROOK



A LIVE UNDERDOG

KELL BROOK IS THE SMALLER MAN BUT ALSO THE BEST FIGHTER **GGG** WILL HAVE FACED

By **Doug Fischer**

There was a feeling of deja vu in the boxing world when it was announced that Gennady Golovkin would defend his IBF, WBA and WBC middleweight titles against IBF welterweight beltholder Kell Brook on Sept. 10 in London.

The reaction on social media was almost identical to what followed

the Canelo Alvarez-Amir Khan announcement earlier in the year. There was immediate shock (as nobody had an inkling either matchup was in the works) followed by outrage (among hardcore nuts who can't wait for the Canelo-Golovkin showdown) and derision aimed at Golovkin for fighting a welterweight and at Brook's promoter Eddie Hearn for tossing his fighter in with the most fearsome middleweight on the planet.

It wasn't all negative. There was a surprising amount of excitement from the diehard followers of both fighters. And British fans are obviously happy to host the next installment of the "Big Drama Show," as evidenced by the O2 Arena selling out in 11 minutes. However, Golovkin-Brook has received grudging acceptance from U.S. fans that will watch it on HBO.

My opinion? I'm not overly enthused by the matchup but I'm OK with it.

I can't be angry at Golovkin or his promotional rep, Tom Loeffler, for accepting Brook as an opponent. They had run out of viable options for Golovkin's September date. Their original goal was to face Canelo but like other top middleweights, such as Billy Joe Saunders and Daniel Jacobs, the Mexican star was not ready for the GGG Challenge (despite brave talk). (In fact, given his next opponent, WBO 154-pound titleholder Liam Smith, it's clear that Canelo isn't ready to be a full-time middleweight.)

After the Canelo negotiations petered out by early June (in part due to the court case Golden Boy Promotions and Alvarez had with All-Star Boxing), young contender Chris Eubank Jr. appeared serious about challenging Golovkin when his promoter, Hearn, began earnest negotiations with Loeffler. However, when father/manager Chris Eubank Sr. made a list of absurd demands (including control of ticket prices and undercard fighter purses) at the 11th hour, Golovkin was seemingly out of options.

Meanwhile, Brook was having his own problems securing a meaningful opponent. The 30-year-old Sheffield native was turned down by such notables as Miguel Cotto, Danny Garcia and Adrien Broner, and an almost-made title-unification fight with Jessie Vargas was the financial victim of the "Brexit." Whether it was self-belief or desperation, Brook stepped up to the plate by accepting the same amount of money that Eubank was offered to face Golovkin.

I can't fault Golovkin or Brook (or their promoters) for wanting to make a big event, especially when the top fighters in their own weight class are leery of facing them.

And looking at the fighters on paper, it's hard to fault the matchup. Golovkin (35-0, 32 knockouts) and Brook (36-0, 25 KOs) are complete fighters, respected as much for their boxing ability and technical prowess as they are for their punching power.

It pits THE RING's No. 1-rated welterweight against the magazine's No. 1-rated middleweight, which links the fight to some of boxing's most iconic matchups. There's a glorious history of standout welterweights challenging great middleweight champs, from Sugar Ray Robinson vs. Jake LaMotta to Roberto Duran and Sugar Ray Leonard vs. Marvin Hagler, which Hearn, Loeffler, HBO and Sky Sports will no doubt draw upon to promote the showdown.

However, I won't get too caught up in nostalgia. Robinson challenged (and stopped) LaMotta for the 160-pound title in February 1951 (the final bout of their legendary six-bout series) after campaigning at middleweight for years. The only time Robinson fought under 150 pounds from 1947 through 1950 was when he defended his welterweight title and that was only five times in 47 bouts during those years. Duran and Leonard had won major belts at 154 pounds prior to challenging Hagler.

Brook is unproven above welterweight, despite having fought as heavy as 155 pounds. And though he has dominated many solid opponents, his only significant victory is his 2014 majority decision over Shawn Porter.

I don't point this out to disparage Brook. (None of today's boxers can compare to Robinson, Leonard and Duran.) I'm just saying he has his work cut out for him and he deserves to be the 6-1 underdog sportsbooks have made him.

But would those odds be any different if Canelo, Eubank, Saunders, Jacobs or any other full-fledged middleweight were facing Golovkin on Sept. 10? I doubt it. In fact, the odds would probably be longer for some. And Brook, whose ability to take a punch is not in question as Khan's was going into the Canelo fight, is still the most talented fighter Golovkin has faced as a pro.

So while I didn't ask for Golovkin-Brook, I plan to enjoy watching it.

HIT AND MISS

Sometimes the decision to fight a bigger man pays off, sometimes it doesn't. Here are three examples of middleweight vs. welterweight matchups that worked out well for the smaller man … and three that didn't (middleweight listed first).

WENT WELL

Jake LaMotta vs. Sugar Ray Robinson (1942-51): Robinson was essentially a welterweight each of the six times he faced full-fledged middleweight LaMotta and Robinson won five times.

Marvin Hagler vs. Sugar Ray Leonard (1987): Leonard weighed under 150 in his previous three fights and hadn't fought for three years when he met Hagler but won a stunning decision.

Dick Tiger vs. Emile Griffith (1966): Griffith had defended his 147-pound title only four months earlier when he challenged the bruising Tiger. Griffith won a unanimous decision.

WENT POORLY

Ceferino Garcia vs. Henry Armstrong (1940): Armstrong was attempting to win a title in a fourth division (when there were only eight) but had to settle for a disputed draw.

Carlos Monzon vs. Jose Napoles (1974): Napoles fought one of the great middleweights in his first fight at that weight and paid a price: The Cuban was stopped in the sixth round.

Harry Greb vs. Mickey Walker (1925): Walker was known for fighting bigger men but he bit off more than he could chew against the legendary Greb, who won a clear decision.

Kell Brook (right) will jump two weight classes to face Gennady Golovkin.

OPEN WATER

WITH RENEWED U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS, BOXERS ONCE STRANDED ON AN ISLAND MIGHT HAVE A LIFELINE

Story and photos by
Brin-Jonathan Butler

The nurturing process in Cuban boxing begins in spartan conditions.

Last March, on the same day U.S. President Barack Obama became the first president in 88 years to visit Cuba, I took a beat-up 1957 Chevy cab into Old Havana along the Malecon, the capital's concrete windowsill overlooking the ocean's gateway and barricade to Miami. It had been five years since my last visit, conducting illegal interviews with Teofilo Stevenson and Felix Savon, as well as the family of Guillermo Rigondeaux – two Olympic boxing legends who had remained in Cuba despite the lure of millions offered to turn professional and another who had left the island in a smuggler's boat to chase it.

As the Chevy passed what was turning into Havana's colonial theme park of architectural treasures, we turned away from the looming El Morro fortress and lighthouse and entered spooky neighborhood pockets facelifted into facsimiles of Seville or San Sebastian. A little further down, I got dropped off next to a gigantic cruise ship docked in the harbor. For better or worse, depending on whom you asked,

Cubans have remained connected to boxing in spite of poor U.S. relations.

more such ships were on the way.

Eight months earlier, Secretary of State John Kerry had overseen the official reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Havana, thus ending more than five decades of diplomatic silence between Cuba and the United States. For a Cuban sports system gutted by many more high-profile defections since Rigondeaux, including baseball players who have succeeded in the professional ranks, the *dashielo cubano* ("Cuban Thaw") meant that some of those athletes, once branded "traitors" by Fidel Castro himself, would be allowed to return. Castro, pushing 90, had remained silent leading up to Obama's visit.

Following a crumbling baroque and neoclassical labyrinth of streets, I reached an area once operated as Havana's most famous red light district for American sailors. That era's most notorious pimp, Alberto Yarini Ponce de Leon, killed in a duel back in 1910, had the largest funeral procession in the city's history. Now the neighborhood surrounded one of Cuba's most famous boxing gyms.

Near the entrance of Gimnasio Rafael Trejo, an Afro-Cuban youth in shades, giant gold watch on his wrist and decked out head to toe in "TMT" clothing, was teasing the Macbeth Witches who for decades have stood guard over the boxers who train in the open air under the stars. Floyd Mayweather Jr. had paid a visit to this gym on a day trip to Havana several months back and perhaps left behind some clothing as souvenirs.

After I shook hands with the kid, he casually addressed me as "campeon" and it stopped me cold. The only Cuban fighters who use "campeon" as a term of affection to outsiders are invariably Cuba's best. I asked for his name. He stood proudly and took off his glasses, "Roniel Iglesias."

"Campeon Olympico de London?" I asked.

He smirked shyly and nodded.

Iglesias' girlfriend approached him and asked for a ride in his shiny black Nissan. I asked him if the government had given it to him for London and he smiled but didn't answer. Joel Casamayor, who in 1996 was the first Cuban Olympic boxing champion who abandoned the island, claimed he did so after the government gave him a Chinese bicycle as a reward for his medal. Yuriorkis Gamboa had sold his gold medal to a tourist for a pittance to cover the costs of his young daughter's birthday party. Cuban athletes for decades had made ends meet back home by selling anything they could get their hands on while touring for international competitions. By the mid-2000s an infrastructure was firmly established for human smuggling conducted with high-speed boats and connections in Cancun, Mexico, or transportation to Europe from countries in South America. A slew of Cuba's most elite boxers, including Odlanier Solis, Erislandy Lara, Rances Barthelemy and Gamboa, either stepped into smugglers' boats as the most lucrative human cargo on earth or had passports lined up by foreign lawyers or boxing managers once they escaped by other means while abroad.

Given The Thaw's possible implications for Cuba's athletic talent, Iglesias' fashion choice seemed anything but capricious. Maybe Mayweather, recently retired from the sport and eager to get involved in promoting fighters, dropped down to Cuba as his own talent scout. The

clothing he'd given away weren't gifts; he was advertising. Maybe he left the car too. He'd set more money on fire in clubs than most elite Cuban athletes would ever see in their lives if they remained on the island.

But Mayweather had certainly picked the right location. Every great champion Cuba had produced, from Kid Chocolate on down to Rigondeaux, had passed through this gym. Since Castro took power in 1959, nearly all of them had turned down vast fortunes to leave. Despite this, foreign promoters and managers never abandoned hope they could lure enormous talent out and do so on the cheap. The joke around Havana was that many Cuban boxing champions signed more contracts to leave with foreign managers and promoters than they did autographs for fans. That had been very true with Rigondeaux, who, once he arrived in the United States, was immediately confronted with litigation from competing entities with whom he'd signed separate contracts.

Through the entrance I saw my old boxing trainer and friend, Hector Vinent, working with a group of children inside Trejo. Hector was a two-time Olympic champion who described his temptation to leave Cuba more eloquently than any writer paid to do so: "The U.S. is like a beautiful girl in love with you that you have to ignore. You resent and lament her and all you have left is living the rest of your life based on memories." He also told me that when he fought internationally, front-row foreign promoters constantly cracked open darkly magical, Pulp Fiction-like suitcases full of cash, or threw in pieces of crumpled-up paper scrawled with handsome sums of money just for Hector to give them two minutes to discuss leaving.

Hector was putting his students through their paces while leaning against the bleachers with a whistle between his lips and a stopwatch hanging from his neck. He is 44 years old now, a father of five. He'd been thrown off the Cuban national team in 2000 before he'd have a chance to leave and had worked at Trejo ever since. I arrived in Havana the same year he began teaching and he offered me private lessons for $6 a day, nearly two weeks' worth of his government salary.

In recent years, since President Raul Castro had eased restrictions on private business, foreign delegations of amateur fighters had been officially permitted to come to Trejo and train under some of Cuba's most elite coaches. As with Cuban coaches being farmed out to Japan and other nations, a minor percentage of the proceeds went into the pockets of individuals while the bulk was hoarded by the state. The measure was put in place to mitigate a black market economy that many estimates had placed above the existing official economy.

Since my last visit, private businesses had opened up legally all across Havana. Wi-Fi spots were finally available with relatively affordable cards distributed by the government. American blockbuster films were permitted to shoot in the country. New restaurants were sprouting up across Havana. American tourism had tripled in the last year. Cubans could now sell their homes legally. Larger portions of foreign remittances were finally allowed into the country (the bulk, of course, from Florida but also European countries and Canada) which created an almost leisure class, conspicuously seen across the city. One of the unintended consequences of the government bending toward capitalism was the growing income inequality between Cubans with access to foreign dollars and those without. And then there was the more predatory foreign investment in real estate, services that could lead the island back to the pre-Revolution days when 70 percent of all businesses were foreign-owned. Fidel had always used his athletes as a symbol of all the

The Cubans are known for good coaches, such as two-time Olympic champion Hector Vinent, and hard work.

achievements of the revolution, but now nearly all of the highest profile baseball players and boxers had fled and become, in turn, ominous symbols of the revolution's failures.

After the session was done I took Hector out for dinner at his favorite spot in Barrio China and he invited me to join him at the upcoming World Series of Boxing tournament the following week. Cuba was going head-to-head against Ukraine at the Ciudad Deportiva Stadium just after the free Rolling Stones concert that was expected to bring anywhere between a few hundred thousand or even a million Cubans from across the island. This tournament meant no more headgear for the Cuban fighters and a lot more money for their families, a concession by the government to stave off more defections.

"I saw Iglesias outside Trejo," I mentioned to Hector.

He shrugged.

"You think he's headed to Rio to defend his gold medal?" I asked.

"I think Floyd Mayweather would prefer he join him in Las Vegas, no?"

I took a cab back through the warm night to my apartment across town. All the lights along the Malecon had been changed and upgraded from their previous feeble-wattage generators that used to give Havana's rim a lush, soft glow. Thousands of people used to glaze the Malecon in silhouette, almost encased in amber while the unseen waves smashed against the concrete below their feet.

On my last night in Havana, I went to the Ciudad Deportiva to watch the World Series of Boxing tournament with Hector. The city was in the midst of a collective hangover. Cubans had come from across the country to see the most expensive concert ever staged on the island, and generations of families and all walks of Cuban life had intermingled joyously for hours beforehand. There were gasps all around me just because the event started on time. And after Mick Jagger greeted the audience in Spanish, an old woman who'd lived when she could have been arrested for having a Stones record in her possession leaned over to me with tears in her eyes: "It's almost like he's greeting an old friend." The biggest nostalgia act on earth couldn't have found a more receptive audience on earth than Havana that night. After all the encores, the streets were filled with hundreds of thousands of people walking home, still drunkenly singing "Satisfaction."

Some Cubans celebrated improved U.S. relations in interesting ways.

Inside the arena, a giant mural of Che Guevara stared down at the crowd from the rafters while a foreign television crew began filming the smoke and light show. The ring apron and corners were adorned with sponsorship logos. The production value of the event – a backwater, barnyard joke compared to anything staged before network cameras in the U.S. – was still a world away from any sporting event I'd witnessed in Havana. For years at the Kid Chocolate arena, they never had enough money for a bell to ring, so they used an emptied fire extinguisher and a hammer to call out the rounds.

Two women, Cuban and Ukrainian, entered the ring bearing their countries' flags. Before the two nations' national anthems were played over the speakers, a big screen offered a personalized montage of the 10 boxers fighting that night. Felix Savon, a towering three-time Olympic champion who'd turned down a $25 million offer to fight Mike Tyson in the '90s, entered the arena and sat front row to watch his nephew compete. A few moments later, the daughter of Savon's hero, Teofilo Stevenson, silenced the crowd with her entrance in a peach summer dress. Savon stood and offered her the chair next to him. It was eerie witnessing the symbolic ghosts of Cuba's past watching the ghosts of Cuba's future. But that had been the story all week, an entire nation caught and wriggling on both horns of a strange dilemma.

One by one the Cubans either

Politics is ubiquitous in Cuba, even at boxing events.

routed their Ukrainian competition on the scorecards or beat them so savagely the referee or their corner called off the fights. There were interviews after the fights, an unheard of practice with athletes in all the years I'd been visiting. The Cuban youths were treated and celebrated as individuals, rather than the old party line of the only superstar the Cuban athlete machine produced was the system itself.

Felix Savon left his seat before his nephew's fight and rushed into the dressing room to offer encouragement. His nephew, Erislandy Savon, had lost a scandalous decision in the London Olympics to hometown hero Anthony Joshua, now the hottest heavyweight prospect in professional boxing. Whatever his uncle had said to him in the dressing room, Erislandy clobbered his opponent inside two rounds after he entered the ring. Robeisy Ramirez, easily the best fighter in Cuba and perhaps the best pound-for-pound amateur in the world, had the most dazzling performance of the night. He danced circles around his opponent before reducing his face to a bloody death mask. It punctuated a night on which Cuba ran the table against Ukraine as the arena's lighting crew simulated a cheesy, low-rent thunderstorm.

With all the changes in window dressing – the pyrotechnics, ersatz jumbotron, deafening sound system and the many cameras covering the event – the crowd's maniacal enthusiasm and devotion to their champions was the same as it had always been. Very little had changed with how common Cubans embraced their athletes. No, the cosmetic changes that night to how boxing was staged in Cuba all signified the way the government was attempting to offer an olive branch to its athletes in an attempt to stave off the hemorrhage of yet more answering the siren song of the Straits.

After seeing Cuba's best remain a dominant force against the rest of the world at the WSB, you couldn't help but wonder about the thoughts and motivations in each young fighter's heart and mind as they fought. Even with all the changes going on in Cuba with Obama's historic visit, the lingering question remained about whether success in the ring solidified the values of Cuba's past or, perhaps, paved the way to imagined success across 90 shark-infested miles. RING

THE SPLIT

The relationship between the U.S. and Cuba disintegrated after Communist guerrillas seized power on the island in 1959. More than a half century later, in 2014, President Obama and Raul Castro, president of Cuba, announced steps to normalize relations. Here are some key early events:

1959 – Fidel Castro and his guerrilla army overthrow the Cuban government.

1960 – U.S. business interests in Cuba are nationalized without compensation.

1961 – The U.S. breaks off diplomatic relations with Cuba, which aligns itself with the Soviet Union.

1961 – U.S. imposes trade embargo on Cuba.

1961 – The U.S.-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion by Cuban exiles fails.

1962 – The Cuban Missile Crisis ends when the Soviet Union removes nuclear missiles from the island.

Brin-Jonathan Butler's most recent book, "The Domino Diaries," (Picador USA) was shortlisted for the PEN/ESPN Award for Literary Sportswriting and was a Boston Globe "Best of 2015" selection. It was released in paperback in June.

The Jewish Golden Age

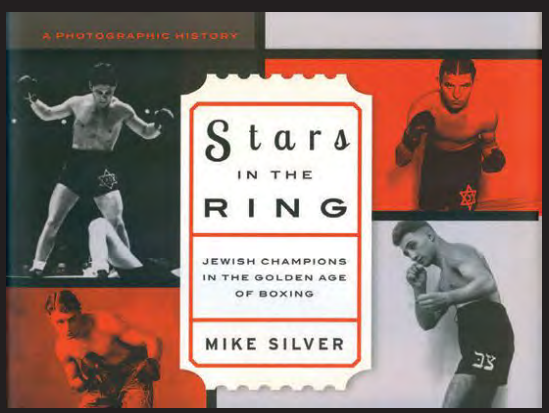
'STARS IN THE RING' RECALLS 'ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE AND COLORFUL CHAPTERS OF THE JEWISH IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA'

One of boxing's more entertaining legends concerns an unsavory manager who brought a Latin American fighter named Marcos to New York in the 1960s, changed his name to Marcus and began touting him in ring circles as "The Star of Zion." The Star, it was widely advertised, was of Orthodox Jewish vintage, fought to bring honor to the Jewish people and would someday be a superb champion. He blew his cover at a B'nai B'rith luncheon when, hungrily eyeing the matzoh, he said politely, "Please pass the tortillas."

"Stars in the Ring" by Mike Silver (Lyons Press) recalls an era when Jewish fighters were many in number and there was no need for subterfuge of that kind. The book's focus is on the period from 1900 to 1940, which Silver calls The Golden Age of Boxing and also a Golden Age for Jewish fighters.

Silver estimates that there were more than 3,000 Jewish boxers in the United States during those four decades. That was between 7 and 10 percent of the total number of professional boxers plying their trade at that time, he writes. During the same period, there were 29 Jewish world champions. In the 1920s, 14 of boxing's 66 world champions were Jewish. Putting these numbers in further perspective, only 52 Jews played major league baseball from 1900 to 1940.

"An unprecedented confluence of social and historic events," Silver writes, "converged to create one of the most unique and colorful chapters of the Jewish immigrant experience in America. At a time when boxing mattered to society far more than it does today, Jewish people were earning the attention and respect of their fellow citizens in the prize ring."



In some respects, "Stars in the Ring" is a social history of boxing as seen through the Jewish experience. Drawing parallels with society as a whole, Silver recounts, "The Golden Age of the Jewish boxer in America coincided with the Golden Age of the Jewish gangster. Both came from the same gritty rough-and-tumble city streets, and their worlds often intersected. In 1921, Jews represented 14 percent of New York State's prison population and Jewish women accounted for 20 percent of all female prisoners in New York State."

Meanwhile, by the mid-1920s, Jewish boxers were so popular that some non-Jewish fighters changed their names to Jewish-sounding ones to advance their ring career. And extending Silver's "Golden Age" by 10 years, it's worth running some numbers regarding Madison Square Garden, which was then "The Mecca of Boxing." In the first five decades of the 20th century, the Garden hosted 866 fight cards. Two hundred forty of those cards featured at least one Jewish fighter in the main event.

The heart of "Stars in the Ring" consists of mini-biographies of 166 Jewish boxers. It's not a book to be read straight through in one or two sittings. The profiles tend to blend together. But it's a good all-in-one reference work on little-known Jewish fighters and their more famous brethren like Abe Atell, Joe Choynski, Ted "Kid" Lewis, Jackie "Kid" Berg, Barney Ross and "Slapsie Maxie" Rosenbloom (whom author Philip Roth called "a more miraculous Jewish phenomenon than Albert Einstein").

There are also interesting nuggets of information on Jewish boxers whose ring exploits were modest at best. For example, a Jewish adolescent growing up on Long Island won 22 of 26 amateur bouts, left the sport for good and later looked back on his years in boxing with the thought, "I must have been out of my mind. But I really enjoyed it while I was doing it."

His name? Billy Joel.

And Silver pays special attention to the man who, mixing religious

Ted "Kid" Lewis (right, unloading on Johnny Basham in 1920) was one of the greatest Jewish fighters ever.

metaphors, could be labeled the patron saint of Jewish boxers: lightweight great Benny Leonard.

Silver calls Leonard "the most famous Jew in America" in the 1920s and "the gold standard to which all other Jewish boxers are compared." He also observes, "Not only was Benny Leonard one of the greatest boxers who ever lived, he was the first Jewish superstar of the mass media age and the first Jewish-American pop culture icon. Leonard's conduct in and out of the ring and his impeccable public image stood as the refutation of the immigrants' anxiety that boxing would suck their children into a criminal underworld or somehow undermine the very rationale for fleeing to the Golden Land. Leonard legitimized boxing as an acceptable Jewish pursuit."

But times change. Inevitably, social and economic progress put an end to the Golden Age of Jewish boxing. That leaves Silver to write, "As the last Jewish boxers of the Golden Age die off, it becomes even more important to document their accomplishments so that future generations can acknowledge and appreciate how a people with no athletic traditions and with so many doors closed to them used their intelligence and drive to open another door to opportunity and eventually dominate, both as athletes and entrepreneurs, what was for several decades the most popular sport in America."

★ ★ ★ ★

"In the Cheap Seats" **by Springs** Toledo (Tora Book Publishing) is a collection of essays written between 2009 and 2015.

Toledo has an understanding and appreciation of boxing history. His

essays join the present to the past. Occasionally, he leans a bit too far toward the lyrical and allegorical rather than the accurate. Hence, Bryant Jennings is analogized to Jack Dempsey and Wladimir Klitschko to Jess Willard.

But Toledo writes well, borrowing from "The Karate Kid" to liken Bernard Hopkins' losing effort against Roy Jones in 1993 to a man trying "to catch a hornet with chopsticks."

Gennady Golovkin's jab is described as "the cramming, not the flicking kind," one that "transformed a simple setup punch into a debilitating weapon" thrown by a fighter "who wore a mask of brutal indifference."

Golovkin's crushing left hook to the body that dropped David Lemieux to the canvas is characterized as follows: "The worst thing about it isn't the pain. It's the cruel delay before the pain. You get just enough time to think about it; two seconds of panic that unmans the roughest and the toughest. Most guys try to muffle a bellow that sounds like a gutted steer."

In another essay – this one about the nature of boxing – Toledo writes, "Draped in a robe that feels like a shroud, the boxer's walk to the ring, trainer in tow, feels something like a condemned man's walk to the death chamber, priest in tow. ... The truth of existence has a way of coming into focus when you're flat on your back under the lights and there's nowhere to look but up. Whether those lights are in an arena, a nursing home, or on a Chicago street is beside the point. We'll all see them eventually."

Toledo also has a good ear for the quotes of others when he's not crafting his own.

There's Mikkel Kessler complaining about the difficulty of fighting Joe Calzaghe: "He ruins your boxing."

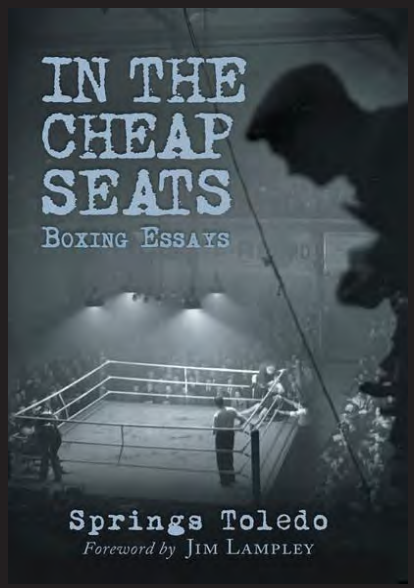
Showtime's Mauro Ranallo notes that the world sanctioning bodies "hand out belts like business cards."

Larry Merchant observes, "We know who the real fighters are. We no longer know who the real champions are."

Floyd Mayweather Jr. comes in for his share of criticism. In an essay written six years ago, Toledo proclaimed, "Floyd 'Money' Mayweather is undefeated. But so were gunfighters who shot at cans on stumps in yards. While his talent is undeniable, Floyd has been spending more time shaking his fist at his legions of critics than he has at serious challengers. Floyd would do well to avoid comparisons between himself and the fistic deities of the past. Even the best of bronze looks dull next to polished gold."

Springs Toledo makes the reader feel a punch Gennady Golovkin landed on David Lemieux.

NAOKI FUKUDA



My favorite passage in the book is Toledo's recounting of referee Roberto Ramirez Sr.'s decision to stop the March 10, 2012, beating that Juan Manuel Lopez was taking at the hands of Orlando Salido. Ramirez, Toledo writes, "had to distinguish between pride and the very real prospect of a ring tragedy. He had a momentous decision to make and only seconds to make it. Luckily, he understood his responsibilities. He turned a deaf ear to the roaring thousands in the Coliseum and looked into the glazed eyes of a defeated fighter. Then he stopped the fight. He knew that no one enters the ring without first suppressing the instinct of self-preservation and that some go too far. The referee is there to protect boxers from their own spirits and remind us that boxing is still a sport." RING

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book ("A Hurting Sport") was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

Kell Brook stunned the boxing world by agreeing to fight Gennady Golovkin.

WORTH THE RISK

KELL BROOK'S DECISION TO FIGHT GENNADY GOLOVKIN IS A GAMBLE BUT HE DESPERATELY NEEDED A BIG FIGHT

After months of deliberation and posturing, it finally happened: Gennady Golovkin signed a contract to defend his world middleweight title in London this September. The opponent, though, will not be Chris Eubank Jr., the middleweight originally in the frame, the man responsible for much of the deliberation and posturing. Instead, IBF welterweight – yes, *welterweight* – titleholder Kell Brook will now be in the opposite corner, having capitalized on the stalling and unequivocally screaming "yes!" when others only mumbled. Brook essentially snatched the deal from under Eubank's nose.

The date, Sept. 10, remains the same. The venue, London's O2 Arena, remains the same. And the fight will also still be at middleweight despite the size disadvantage this presents to Brook. It all adds up to a daunting task on paper but immense credit goes to Brook for backing himself and accepting a fight with a man many middleweights would rather not face, much less welterweights.

I suspect Brook's own frustrations had a lot to do with his decision. After all, he too had fallen victim to deliberation and posturing when trying to negotiate a unification title clash with America's WBO titlist, Jessie Vargas. That was another saga that stretched out far longer than necessary; in the end, neither man could come to an agreement, the money decreased as a result of Britain's decision to leave the European Union and Brook was suddenly left with the terrifying proposition of having to defend his IBF belt against another Kevin Bizier-, Jo Jo Dan- or Frankie Gavin-type opponent in the second half of the year. When you consider it's been two years since he upset the odds and defeated Shawn Porter to win the belt, that's simply not good enough.

But chances are he knows this and so does his promoter, Eddie Hearn. It's likely the reason both pulled the trigger on a fight with Golovkin, someone who represents huge danger

and risk, two things Brook has been accused of avoiding since outpointing Porter in August 2014. The fear now, of course, is that Golovkin-Brook mirrors Amir Khan's fight with Canelo Alvarez in May, which is to say the desperate need for a big event and payday – a desire both Khan and Brook have in common – results in a Brit biting off far more than he can chew. A knockout defeat in Khan's case was as conclusive as it was inevitable. Brook knows this. He was one of the first to comment on it. Well, on Sept. 10 he will get the chance to do what Khan couldn't – the seemingly impossible.

ANTHONY JOSHUA

It probably feels good to be Anthony Joshua right now: heavyweight titleholder, 17-0 (with 17 knockouts), a pay-per-view star in the United Kingdom and arguably one of the most marketable sportsmen this side of the Atlantic. He has plenty going for him. Better still, he has an entire division at his mercy, countless contenders willing to fight him because they are aware of the kind of money they will make in doing so. Consequently, he can pretty much pick and choose his route to greatness – providing, of course, he can actually fight (something he has yet to demonstrate at an elite level).

This year he has made giant strides commercially and become a major star in the U.K. And his next outing, we're told, will be in November. Opponents linked to that date include his mandatory challenger, New Zealand's Joseph Parker, and former WBC titleholder Bermane Stiverne. Either works. Both Parker and Stiverne represent a step up from unbeaten Americans Charles Martin and Dominic Breazeale. Parker is tough and talented, Stiverne is proven. There will be less of the unknown element that shrouded Joshua's fights with Martin and Breazeale. Stylistically, too, Parker and Stiverne should match up nicely with Joshua, perhaps even ask him a serious question or two. At this stage, that's all we require.

Anthony Joshua has made big strides commercially this year.

Dates with British rivals Tyson Fury and David Haye, as well as leading American Deontay Wilder, can wait until next year. Those fights will happen on Joshua's terms and on his schedule. Why? Because he's the money in the money division and, in this day and age, cash trumps titles.

ANTHONY CROLLA AND TERRY FLANAGAN

Anthony Crolla and Terry Flanagan, two lightweight champions from Manchester, continue to fight other opponents when they should probably just fight each other. At least Crolla's clash with Jorge Linares on Sept. 24 in Manchester is a good one. Flanagan's 12-rounder with Mzonke Fana in July was somewhat less acceptable. It was a marking-time fight in the purest sense, as Flanagan, always in control, outboxed the 42-year-old South African for every one of the 12 rounds they shared to retain his title in predictable fashion but offered little in the way of drama or excitement. In fairness, Flanagan-Fana was originally scheduled for the undercard of the postponed world heavyweight title rematch between Tyson Fury and Wladimir Klitschko and was essentially a showcase for Flanagan and nothing more, a fight to boost his profile and yet another appearance in Manchester. There was no attempt to make a statement or put the division on red alert. Even so, such fights should now be at an end.

We know Flanagan can fight. He has shown considerable ability in wins against the likes of Diego Magdaleno and fellow Brit Derry Mathews. Now we need to see him tested against the very best the division has to offer, or, perhaps,

WBO junior lightweight titleholder Vasyl Lomachenko, who has emerged only recently as an opponent Flanagan fancies. That would work. Better than Lomachenko, though, is a fight between Flanagan and Crolla. It's a fight that means a great deal in England, especially in Manchester, and would no doubt fill the 20,000-capacity Manchester Arena or do great business at a football stadium. The two men live within spitting distance of each other, Flanagan supports Manchester City football club while Crolla follows Manchester United, and a city would be divided in the most competitive and magical way. Ultimately, if it never happens, it will be a crying shame, akin to Ricky Hatton and Junior Witter failing to get it on as fast-rising junior welterweights. It would confuse and hurt just as much.

LIFE AFTER BOXING

Friend and journalist Nick Parkinson has written an intriguing book – "A Champion's Last Fight: The Struggle with Life After Boxing" – on the troubles and travails of British boxers after retirement. It details depression, drug abuse and alcoholism, and CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy), in particular telling the stories of Benny Lynch, Randy Turpin, Freddie Mills, John Conteh, Ken Buchanan, Charlie Magri, Frank Bruno, Chris Eubank, Nigel Benn, Naseem Hamed, Scott Harrison, Joe Calzaghe and Ricky Hatton. Parkinson details the extent of the trouble Lynch found himself in before alcoholism took his life at 37. Previous studies/books have not recorded some of the things Lynch was arrested for, one of them trying to gas his baby son. Parkinson also uncovers letters written by Turpin, including his revelatory suicide note, published for the first time. However, his daughter Carmen – whom Turpin allegedly shot before killing himself, although she can't remember anything as she was a toddler – believes Turpin was murdered.

Mills' stepson believes the Richardsons crime gang – and not the Krays, as some believe – were responsible for his death, which was ruled a suicide. Then there is Buchanan on the sexual assault and alcoholism that have blighted his retirement. He is also suffering from dementia, which he attributes to boxing.

"When I went to interview Ken Buchanan," Parkinson told me, "I expected him to be living better and more comfortably than he was. He was quite frail and spoke candidly about losing money, being sexually assaulted, suffering from dementia and his problems with alcoholism over the years. … Not long after I visited Ken, he was hospitalized for alcoholism after being picked up from a park bench. It was sad to see someone who had achieved so much in the boxing ring struggle so much in life after finishing with boxing."

Parkinson added of Buchanan and others: "The effects of CTE, the degenerative brain disease, are an inescapable inevitability for many former boxers like Ken and research suggests it is highly undiagnosed and likely to affect most former boxers."

It really does make sense to establish an organization that offers support or advice for ex-boxers, as exists in many other sports. Adjusting to a different life cannot be easy. The licensing and sanctioning bodies, and perhaps even promoters, should be examining ways of tackling this.

JAMIE WOOD

Finally … why we love boxing. In August 2012, I reported in this column on how Jamie Wood was a testament to the healing power of boxing. In 2010, at 17, Wood, then an amateur boxer, was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma. He had a 2-inch tumor in his upper mouth that was pushing onto his brain. Two major operations meant the removal of the roof of his mouth, eight teeth and bone around his sinuses. His boxing training continued. It was all he lived for. Literally. When bone and tissue were taken from his shoulder blade to reconstruct his mouth, and 35 staples put in his back where they had excavated bone for use in the 13-hour operation, the surgery was a success. Jamie was meant to stay in the hospital three weeks but was out after five days. A few months later, after 16 sessions of chemotherapy and the life-saving operations, he was boxing again. I am delighted to report that Jamie Wood is still as fit as a fiddle, though he had to give up boxing because there was movement in the reconstructed bone. But Wood is very much alive, running marathons, and has wed in recent weeks. It was boxing, though, that pulled him through the most difficult time he will ever face. We celebrate that. Cheers.

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The Telegraph, London.

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dorn4boxing@gmail.com

EXCERPTS FROM THE **RINGTV.COM** EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag." The following excerpts are from the July 15 and 18 editions of the Monday and Friday mailbags.

CARLOS, from Hermosillo, Mexico, asked Fischer which fight he plans to cover live on Sept. 10 – the Gennady Golovkin-Kell Brook event at O2 Arena in London or flyweight champ Roman Gonzalez's challenge to junior bantamweight titleholder Carlos Cuadras at The Forum in Inglewood, California. Carlos is very excited about the Cuadras-Gonzalez showdown and views the Mexican 115-pounder as a "smaller version" of Canelo Alvarez.

DOUGIE'S reply: I will definitely be at my favorite arena, the "Fabulous" Forum, which happens to be a 5-minute drive from my humble abode in Inglewood.

Gonzalez's first high-profile headliner in the U.S. is a real fight and deserving of major media attention and fanfare. We've got the RING/WBC flyweight champ, a 45-0 three-division beltholder atop everyone's pound-for-pound rankings, challenging the WBC 115-pound titleholder who is unbeaten in 36 fights (35-0-1). Both are complete fighters, both have entertaining styles and both are at their athletic and career peaks.

Any so-called fan who finds a reason to pooh-pooh this matchup needs to stop watching boxing and find something else to do with their time.

I never thought about the similarities between Alvarez and Cuadras until you brought it up but I think you're right. He even kind of looks like a "Canelo Mini-Me." They are similar style-wise. Both are economical but heavy-handed. Both have good punch variation and both load up with their lefts (especially to the body). However, Cuadras is busier (as you would expect a sub-bantamweight to be in comparison with a junior middleweight/middleweight) and lighter on his feet.

JACK, from Vancouver, Canada, was impressed with the sharp and powerful jab that Deontay Wilder displayed during his one-sided eight-round stoppage of Chris Arreola. Jack asked Fischer to name the best jabber in heavyweight history and the big man with the best jab among active heavyweights.

DOUGIE'S reply: I think Muhammad Ali's jab is the best all-around left stick in heavyweight history, followed by Joe Louis' brilliant power-punch jab. Honorable mentions: Sonny Liston (like the jab of his idol Louis, it was a ramrod), Larry Holmes (like the jab of his idol Ali, it was educated and stinging), George Foreman (the mighty wielder of the quintessential "telephone-pole" jab), Jersey Joe Walcott, Gene Tunney and Lennox Lewis.

Joining Lewis among the best heavyweight jabbers of the past 30 years are the Klitschko brothers, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Tim

Witherspoon, Michael Moorer and Ray Mercer.

I'd have to go with Wladimir Klitschko as the best active heavyweight jabber, even though he wasn't able to use his jab effectively against Tyson Fury last November. That punch was one of the keys to his dominance (along with the grab-and-hold tactics the late, great Emanuel Steward instilled). But I think Deontay Wilder, Anthony Joshua, Luis Ortiz (who varies the speed, power and frequency of his right stick brilliantly while setting up his big left), and of course, Fury (who doesn't possess the most "dynamic" jab but he's tricky with it, combines it well with feints and he can pop it effectively from a southpaw stance) are all in possession of world-class jabs and any one of them could take Wladdy's place as the No. 1 heavyweight jabber next year.

AARON, from Wales, wanted Fischer's take on the co-headliners of a major card that recently took place in Cardiff, an event that featured THE RING's No. 1-rated junior featherweight Guillermo Rigondeaux (who halted overmatched James Dickens after two rounds), British welterweight standout Bradley Skeete (who stopped French veteran Alexandre Lepelley in seven rounds) and junior middleweight prospect Liam Williams (who wore down unbeaten Londoner Gary Corcoran in 11 rounds). Aaron asked who Fischer would match Williams with next if he were the Welshman's promoter. He wondered what's next for "Rigo" and whether anyone of note will ever fight the counterpunching Cuban master. He also asked whether Skeete would have a shot against any of the current welterweight titleholders.

DOUGIE'S reply: If Skeete fought any of the 147-pound beltholders (Kell Brook, Keith Thurman, Jessie Vargas or Danny Garcia) this year or in early 2017, I would not give him much of a shot at winning, but I do think the 28-year-old Londoner is a solid welterweight fringe contender with potential.

Given Skeete's height, reach, reflexes, educated jab, mobility and disciplined stick-and-move style, my guess is that his best shot at winning a major welterweight title would be against Garcia. The current WBC beltholder has been troubled by a smart jab (see the Mauricio Herrera fight) and lateral movement (see the Lamont Peterson fight) in the recent past. The question is whether Skeete, who has shown solid whiskers so far, can take Garcia's power.

I thought Williams looked good enough for me to want to see him fight again. The 24-year-old looks strong and sturdy with good timing, a solid foundation and a hard, educated jab. He kind of reminds me of Liam Smith but the current WBO titleholder has tighter technique and maybe crisper, harder punches. However, I think Williams is a little more fluid, lighter on his feet and maybe more versatile. He seems like a natural fighter to me. Who would I put Williams in with next? Even though he has only 16 fights I'd put him in tough, against a tried-and-true gatekeeper, maybe the winner of the Jesus Soto Karass-Yoshihiro Kamegai rematch or Carson Jones. If he passed the test (and I think he would), I'd have him target a faded former titleholder like Cornelius Bundrage or a former Top-10 contender like Willie Nelson.

I have no clue what Rigo will do next. If I were managing his career (and that's not a job I would want), I'd try to lure the top bantamweights, such as the winner of the upcoming Shinsuke Yamanaka-Anselmo Moreno rematch or Jamie McDonnell or the winner of the Lee Haskins-Stuart Hall fight, up to 122 pounds.

I don't think the top dogs at 122 and 126 pounds will fight him. He might get lucky with Scott Quigg but I don't think he ever gets another fight with Nonito Donaire or a shot at Carl Frampton, Leo Santa Cruz or Gary Russell Jr. I think the Santa Cruz-Frampton winner takes on Russell.

Lamont Roach admits he's a work in progress.

STUDENT OF THE GAME

LAMONT ROACH JR. STUDIES GREAT FIGHTERS INSTEAD OF COLLEGE LESSONS FOR NOW

Lamont Roach Jr. has seen a lot in his brief pro career. He has fought on the undercard of Canelo Alvarez vs. Amir Khan and on several other big shows. He has received a pep talk from ring legend Bernard Hopkins before one of his fights. Roach (11-0, 3 knockouts) has quickly developed into a top prospect, showing a mature, mindful approach to the way he boxes. Little, it seems, has rattled him so far in his two years as a paid performer.

But the 20-year-old admits he was a little taken aback when he flipped on HBO and took in Vasyl Lomachenko's fifth-round beatdown

of Roman Martinez on June 11. Roach watched the fight with vested interest because he fights at lightweight, just a few pounds above Lomachenko. Roach recalls what he was thinking as he watched Lomachenko dazzle a national audience.

"That I got some work to do in my weight class," Roach said with a laugh. "Things like that motivate me to get better because it sets a standard where you have to prepare yourself to be able to perform at that level. That's motivation for me because I want to get there one day."

Roach, 20, is no stranger to trying to do the incredible. He enrolled at the University of Maryland and was studying mechanical engineering while also juggling a pro career. But consumed with his career, Roach found it too difficult to keep up with his studies and left school after his freshman year to chase his dream of becoming a world champion.

"It's pretty hard to balance boxing and college," he said. "College professors don't care about if I have to go out of town because I have a fight. It's not like I box for my school. It's not like I'm a football player that gets excused. When I did get accepted into Maryland I was very happy and then, when I had to leave, my mom was heartbroken. But I believe in the end that I made the right decision."

Roach signed with Golden Boy Promotions in the middle of his second semester at school, ramping up the urgency and gravity of what he was doing.

"Toward the last semester, I could see my focus and other things that would affect me in school slipping," said Roach, who was 125-15 as an amateur. "After my career, if the opportunity presents itself, then I will definitely (go back to school)."

For now, boxing is the priority, and Roach can be his own worst critic. He admits he needs to do a better job at finishing his opponents when he gets them hurt. With just three knockouts in 11 fights, Roach knows that if he's going to develop into a fan favorite, he needs to give them a reason to cheer.

"The fans like knockouts," he said. "And that's how you get the big bucks."

Roach is trained by his cousin, Bernard Roach, who previously worked with former titleholder DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley. Roach Jr. had a chance to spar with Corley when he was an amateur. He believes his style is evolving with each fight.

"I just describe myself as a boxer-puncher," he says. "I have very good skills, nice speed and power that is deceiving because of my record. But every fight I've been in I've severely hurt my opponent. I'm just trying to get better with every fight. That's the key to having success." RING

THE ESSENTIALS
LAMONT ROACH JR.

Age: 20

Weight class: Lightweight

Height: 5 feet 7 inches

Stance: Orthodox

Hometown: Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Record: 11-0 (3 KOs)

Biggest strengths: Boxing skills are advanced for someone of his age. ★ Creates distance and moves head well and always seems to be in defensive position.

Biggest question marks: Ability to finish off opponents. Admits he needs to do a better job of stepping on the gas when he gets his opponents hurt.

3 MORE TO WATCH

JOSH TAYLOR
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Taylor (5-0, 5 KOs) has yet to go past the second round in his brief career. He is an aggressive fighter who appears to have power in both hands and likes to burrow in with his gloves held high, showing a quick first step. A former amateur standout from Scotland, the 5-foot-11 Taylor is promoted by Barry McGuigan's Cyclone Promotions.

JEAN CARLOS RIVERA
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

The baby-faced Rivera (7-0, 4 KOs) is just 20 but has a mature style, filled with well-placed punches, little steps to create distance and a mindful approach that incorporates both offense and defense. The Top Rank-signed prospect is a patient stalker, much like a fellow Puerto Rican fighter he longs to emulate: Miguel Cotto.

STIVENS BUJAJ
CRUISERWEIGHT

Bujaj (16-0-1, 11 KOs) is on the verge of contender status but is still developing his arsenal. The New York product possesses a sturdy chin and good boxing skills. Bujaj, who is managed by Don Majeski, has good enough reflexes to fight with his hands down by his waist at times. He's also a very game fighter, as evidenced by his 2014 slugfest with Junior Wright that ended in a draw.

Amanda Serrano (left) vs. Jelena Mrdjenovich would be one of the best possible matchups.

BEST VS. BEST

THERE ARE POTENTIAL BARNBURNERS TO BE MADE AMONG THE TOP FEMALE FIGHTERS. HERE ARE FIVE.

While talk of prospective fights like Canelo Alvarez vs. Gennady Golovkin, Anthony Joshua vs. Tyson Fury and Sergey Kovalev vs. Andre Ward fill up message boards and light up Twitter, fans of the ladies of the sweet science have their own set of dream fights that they want to see as soon as possible. Here are five that can – and should – be made now.

JELENA MRDJENOVICH vs. AMANDA SERRANO

There are a million theories when it comes to what might cause women's boxing to explode here in the United States. My vote: Pit a Canadian (Mrdjenovich) against a Puerto Rican (Serrano) on U.S. premium cable or primetime network TV. Simply put, no one in the women's game hits harder than Mrdjenovich and Serrano. With 40 knockouts between them, odds are that someone won't hear the final bell. Add in that each holds a portion of the featherweight world title and we're talking high-stakes action and a distinct probability that fans will see something they usually don't in women's boxing – a definitive knockout at the highest level of the game.

CECILIA BRAEKHUS vs. ERICA FARIAS

A glance at the record of Argentina's Farias reveals a fearless competitor willing to go anywhere at any weight to fight the best. And while she currently owns a junior welterweight world title, she has told THE RING that she has no issue jumping up a weight class to challenge Braekhus, the pound-for-pound queen from Norway. Forced to battle injuries more than opponents as of late, Braekhus could use a fight like this, which would not only be a favorable style matchup for her to display her skills but might also push her to the limit and give her that one formidable foil she missed out on when Holly Holm retired. As for Farias, she proved in THE RING's Fight of the Year for 2015 against Klara Svensson that a height disadvantage and a change of scenery are no problem for her.

HEATHER HARDY vs. SHELLY VINCENT

If you're an East Coast boxing fan, no female fight is bigger, and no rivalry has been simmering for as long as the one between New York's Hardy and New England's Vincent. Think Yankees-Red Sox with gloves on and you've got this one pegged. These two have been at it over social media for years. And while promotional issues have kept the two action fighters apart in the past, now with Hardy and Vincent both signed with DiBella Entertainment the only obstacle left is television as company founder Lou DiBella wants this one on the tube. It's hard to blame him: This fight is made for TV.

KENIA ENRIQUEZ vs. SENIESA ESTRADA

Hardy vs. Vincent is East Coast. The West Coast has to get some love too and Enriquez vs. Estrada would be a fight those in Southern California could definitely get behind. Actually, anyone could get behind a fight pitting the last two Prospect of the Year winners against each other. And with Tijuana squaring off against East L.A. it's a turf war that could kick off a women's boxing explosion in California to rival the one in Mexico. At the moment, Enriquez has the edge in world class experience but Estrada believes that with both of them appearing on the recent Golovkin vs. Dominic Wade card at The Forum, a showdown is just a matter of time.

DELFINE PERSOON vs. LAYLA MCCARTER

This may be the longshot of the group in terms of it actually happening but if the boxing gods are listening, Persoon vs. McCarter could end up being one of the best women's fights ever. Belgium's Persoon is rapidly closing in on the top spot on the pound-for-pound list. A victory over the veteran McCarter could be the clincher to knock Braekhus from her perch. But the 37-year-old McCarter is on a different level from the busier Persoon technically and experience-wise. She hasn't lost since 2007 and recently she's been showing off fight-ending power. Money might get in the way here. If it doesn't, this fight could be special.

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

IBETH ZAMORA SILVA

TKO 7 KE SHER MCLEOD WELLS

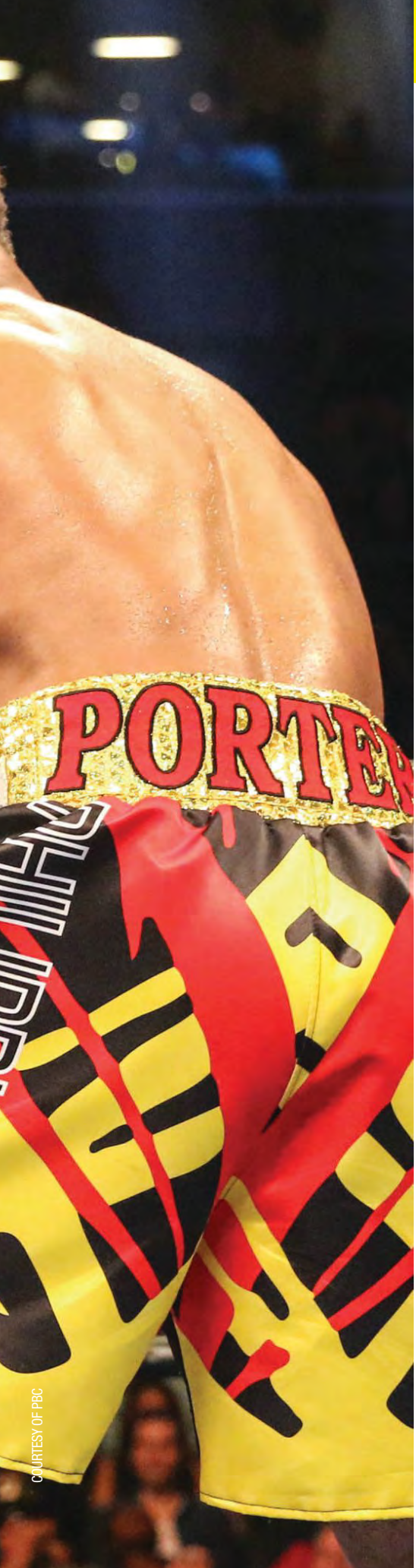
Making the seventh defense of her WBC junior flyweight title, Mexico's "La Roca" appears to be hitting her prime at 27. She steadily broke down the talented New Yorker McLeod-Wells and put her down twice in the seventh round, prompting a referee stoppage. McLeod-Wells hadn't lost since 2011 and had never been stopped. Silva has three knockouts in her last four victories as her current winning streak enters its fifth year.

POUND FOR POUND

1. **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
   Norway • 28-0 (7 KOs)
   We terweight
2. **DELFINE PERSOON**
   Be gium • 36-1 (16 KOs)
   Lightweight
3. **YESICA YOLANDA BOPP**
   Argentina • 29-1 (12 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
4. **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
   Canada • 36-10-1 (19 KOs)
   Featherweight
5. **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
   Mexico • 27-4-3 (4 KOs)
   Flyweight
6. **LAYLA MCCARTER**
   U S • 38-13-5 (9 KOs)
   Lightweight
7. **ERICA ANABELLA FAR AS**
   Argentina • 22-1 (10 KOs)
   Junior we terweight
8. **IBETH ZAMORA SILVA**
   Mexico • 26-5 (11 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
9. **ZULINA MUNOZ**
   Mexico • 47-1-2 (28 KOs)
   Junior bantamweight
10. **AMANDA SERRANO**
    U S. • 28-1-1 (21 KOs)
    Featherweight

Through fights of July 24, 2016

Keith Thurman (left) emerged victorious in an evenly matched fight against Shawn Porter on June 25.



COURTESY OF PBC

RINGSIDE REPORTS

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

KEITH THURMAN UD 12 SHAWN PORTER

Date: June 25
Site: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Division: Welterweight
Weights: Thurman 146 pounds, Porter 147
RING ratings (before fight): Thurman No. 3, Porter No. 4
Network: CBS

It was a very good fight, called a Fight of the Year contender by a business badly in need of one. Whether Keith Thurman's unanimous decision over Shawn Porter will collect many votes in end-of-the-year balloting is anybody's guess.

But the welterweight title fight's significance will be remembered for what it said about the state of the game and its increasingly ineffective pay-per-view model.

Thurman-Porter was no Hagler-Hearns. There were no knockdowns. But there weren't any complaints either from a CBS audience that watched a compelling 12 rounds for free.

The first half of 2016 has been a story about how to repair damage done by the Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Manny Pacquiao dud in 2015. Crashing PPV numbers said, again and again, that so-called crossover fans have left the building. The question has been how to bring them back.

Thurman and Porter provided a pretty good answer. Perhaps the only one. A solid bout for free might not make anybody forget that they had been suckered by the $100 price for Mayweather-Pacquiao but it could remind them that boxing can still deliver.

"I don't want pay-per-view," Thurman said in what should be Quote of the Year. "I don't want you to pay for this entertainment. There's too much world-class athletic entertainment available for free. I want all of America to see me fight.

"I didn't have HBO growing up, I didn't have Showtime growing up, and if you have HBO and you have Showtime, and they make it pay-per-view, now you've got to come out of your pocket some more. I'm not trying to gouge the American people and the American public."

Spoken like a true People's Champ.

Of course, there's a question about whether Thurman (27-0, 22 KOs) can claim to be a legitimate PPV attraction. Then again, who can in the post-Mayweather-Pacquiao era? Even Pacquiao did disappointing numbers in his victory over Timothy Bradley in an April rubber match.

But Thurman's gritty victory over Porter (26-2-1, 16 KOs), which he took by 115-113 scores on all three cards, is a sign of his emerging know-how.

An audience that, according to ratings, averaged 3.1 million viewers and peaked at 3.94 million will likely be back to see him, perhaps against Danny Garcia. Thurman talked about Kell Brook but Brook eliminated that as an immediate possibility with his decision to jump up in weight to face feared middleweight Gennady Golovkin.

Thurman even talked about Pacquiao, who in July was rumored to be thinking about a fight on Nov. 5. However, it wasn't clear whether Pacquiao, a senator in the Philippines, had the time to fight. It also wasn't clear whether he would want to fight on free TV after a long, lucrative run on PPV.

Another possibility was a rematch.

"Would love to do that again," Porter said on his Twitter account.

On FPV (Free-Per-View), we'd love to see it. »

WORLDWIDE RESULTS— Go to: bit.ly/worldwide-results or scan the QR code to see weekly fight results at RingTV.com.

VASYL LOMACHENKO
KO 5
NO. 5 ROCKY MARTINEZ
June 11, New York (HBO)

It's hard to overstate what Vasyl Lomachenko is doing. Even Bob Arum, an undisputed master of hyperbole, tried and failed.

"Ali is the greatest of all time," Arum said after Lomachenko won a title in his first junior lightweight bout, defeating Rocky Martinez by a fifth-round KO that ranks as one of the biggest in 2016. "You're looking at history. This is history, not hyperbole. We haven't seen the likes of him ever."

He might be right. Lomachenko (6-1, 4 KOs), a two-time Olympic gold medalist, won his second major belt in only his seventh pro bout. Ali and Joe Frazier, also gold medalists, won their first heavyweight titles in their 20th fights.

"I couldn't see his hands," Martinez (29-3-3, 17 KOs) said of the speed that has characterized Lomachenko's emergence.

With the Martinez victory, Lomachenko vaulted to No. 7 in THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings.

NO. 6 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
TKO 12 **WILLIE NELSON**
June 11, Verona, N.Y. (Showtime)

Demetrius Andrade likes to say he's still young, tall, black and handsome.

Still a contender, too.

Andrade kept himself in the hunt for a junior middleweight title with a victory he had to have to silence doubts about his career. With only two bouts in two years, Andrade (23-0, 16 KOs) had begun to slip into anonymity.

He was in danger of being the subject of that inevitable question: Hey, whatever happened to …?

Turns out the 27-year-old southpaw from Providence, Rhode Island, had all the answers in delivering relentless combinations to knock out the lanky Willie Nelson (25-3-1, 15 KOs), who found himself on the canvas four times, including twice in the 12th before the fight was stopped at 1:38 of the round.

With the win, Andrade gained a mandatory shot at the WBC title.

JOHN MOLINA
UD 12
NO. 3 RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV
June 11, Verona, N.Y. (Showtime)

It was supposed to be a potential Fight of the Year. It wasn't.

Instead, it left only questions about Ruslan Provodnikov, who three years ago stormed into stardom, going from unknown to unbelievable in a wild loss to Timothy Bradley.

Provodnikov bore no resemblance to that self-proclaimed "crazy guy" in a dull 117-111, 116-112, 115-113 loss to 7-1 underdog John Molina (29-6, 23 KOs).

The absence of any real energy from Provodnikov (25-5, 18 KOs) prompted his promoter, Artie Pelullo, to wonder aloud about the Russian junior welterweight.

"If he going to fight like that, then there's no reason for him to keep going," Pelullo told RingTV.com before a planned meeting with Providnokov in late July.

A further reason for Pelullo's concern: The trend isn't good. Provodnikov is 2-3 since a stoppage of Mike Alvarado in October 2013.

JOE SMITH JR. TKO 1
NO. 8 ANDRZEJ FONFARA
June 18, Chicago (NBC)

Never heard of Joe Smith Jr.? Andrzej Fonfara never had either, until Smith introduced himself with a right that was more of a bomb than a handshake.

Moments after the opening bell, Fonfara, a ranked light heavyweight, was dropped flat on his back by a right counter from Smith, who has a day job in construction in Long Island, New York.

Fonfara (28-4, 16 KOs), known for beating Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and hoping for a rematch with Adonis Stevenson, got to his feet but looked like a guy who just got hit by an errant brick. Smith (22-1, 18 KOs), a Rocky-like underdog at 25-1 odds, wasted no time, launching a succession of huge shots that forced a stoppage at 2:32 of the first round.

"Now everybody knows who I am," said Smith, who might be remembered for the 2016 Upset of the Year.

NO. 5 ANTHONY JOSHUA
TKO 7 **DOMINIC BREAZEALE**
June 25, London (Showtime, Sky Sports Box Office)

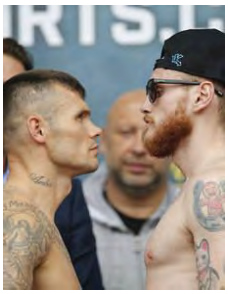
The first step was a title. The second was a defense. Now Anthony Joshua seeks validation.

"Now it's going to get serious because people are calling me out, far and wide, across the world," Joshua (17-0, 17 KOs) said after a seventh-round stoppage of Dominic Breazeale (17-1, 15 KOs) in a defense of the title he took from Charles Martin.

Actually, the world of heavyweight contenders is a pretty small place. There's Tyson Fury, Wladimir Klitschko, Deontay Wilder and Luis Ortiz.

The Fury possibility looms as a U.K. showdown but his schedule still includes a postponed date with Klitschko. Wilder called out Joshua but injuries will sideline the American for a while. That leaves the dangerous Ortiz. Or maybe Alexander Povetkin? New Zealand's Joseph Parker is Joshua's IBF mandatory.

First, however, Joshua says he wants a voluntary defense with "a serious contender" for some serious validation.



NO. 5 GEORGE GROVES UD 12 MARTIN MURRAY

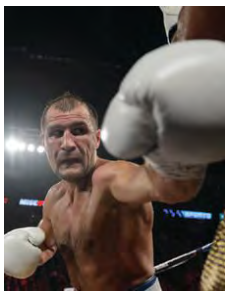
June 25, London (Sky Sports Box Office, Showtime)

George Groves arrived at the proverbial crossroads, looking for still another chance. He found one, scoring a decision over Martin Murray that puts him back in the hunt for a super middleweight title.

Groves (24-3, 18 KOs) calls himself The Saint but has never been blessed enough to win a belt. He's 0 for 3 in title fights, including a split decision loss to Badou Jack.

Against Murray (33-4-1, 16 KOs), Groves was dominating enough to win 118-110 on all three cards but there were moments in the final three rounds when it looked as if he would have to find a new line of work.

"I performed great but I got caught with punches," said Groves, who scored with a jab and hurt Murray in the seventh with an uppercut, allowing him to hold on for the win.



NO. 1 SERGEY KOVALEV UD 12 NO. 7 ISAAC CHILEMBA

July 11, Ekaterinburg, Russia (HBO)

It was a hard performance to judge, perhaps because of timing and geography. Sergey Kovalev went home, added an expected victory to his resume but left doubt about his chances against Andre Ward.

Maybe that was a plan, one with four tasks: Win, stay busy, avoid injury and provide no clues that could help Ward devise a strategy for their scheduled showdown in November.

Kovalev (30-0-1, 26 KOs) checked off all of the boxes in a 117-110, 116-111, 118-109 decision over Isaac Chilemba (24-4-2, 10 KOs) in a light heavyweight fight that might become as forgettable as a sparring session.

Kovalev looked beatable, perhaps because of a cold or distractions surrounding his first fight at home in five years. Whatever it was, Ward said he didn't watch.

"I'm not putting much stock in what is being said," Ward said before his August tune-up against Alexander Brand.

NO. 2 DEONTAY WILDER TKO 8 CHRIS ARREOLA

July 15, Birmingham, Ala. (Fox)

Deontay Wilder wanted a victory, a paycheck and more for all the work he had done for an Alexander Povetkin bout that didn't happen because of Povetkin's positive drug test.

Wilder (37-0, 36 KOs) got the win and a $1.5 million payday for an eighth-round stoppage of Chris Arreola (36-5-1, 31 KOs) but the "more" included an unwanted price.

Injuries to his biceps and an already surgically repaired right hand against a late and over-matched substitute figured to sideline Wilder for the rest of 2016, meaning he is probably off the board of possibilities for Anthony Joshua in November.

"He's definitely going to need surgery on his right hand," promoter Lou DiBella said a day after Wilder floored Arreola in the fourth and forced his trainer to end it after eight. "He will have it as soon as is practical. He will likely also require surgery on his biceps."

NO. 8 OSCAR VALDEZ TKO 2 MATIAS RUEDA

July 23, Las Vegas (HBO PPV)

Bob Arum bragged before the opening bell that Oscar Valdez would one day be a featherweight legend, a name alongside Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera. We'll have to wait on that one.

In the here and now, however, Valdez has already joined a select crowd. The two-time Mexican Olympian is one of the featherweight titleholders, winning his first title, the WBO belt, with a sensational stoppage of Argentina's Matias Rueda.

"I've been dreaming about this since I was 6 years old," said Valdez (20-0, 18 KOs) after stopping Rueda (26-1, 23 KOs) with a body shot at 2:18 of the second round.

It looks as if the dream will continue where it started, in Tucson, where the 25-year-old Valdez plans to make his first title defense in November, perhaps against the winner of the Aug. 27 fight between Miguel Marriaga and Guy Robb.

NO. 2 TERENCE CRAWFORD UD 12 NO. 1 VIKTOR POSTOL

July 23, Las Vegas (HBO PPV)

Terence Crawford wore gold gloves. He fought like quicksilver.

Key elements were there for Crawford, who improved the chances of filling his hands with real gold, perhaps against Manny Pacquiao, with brilliant elusiveness against Viktor Postol.

It was supposed to match the Nos. 1 and 2 junior welterweights. But it was more like Usain Bolt against a first-time jogger. Postol, No. 1 at the opening bell, never could catch or even find Crawford (29-0, 20 KOs), who circled with effortless grace that seemed to make Postol (28-1, 12 KOs) only stumble.

Postol was down twice but the knockdowns might've been more a result of a futile chase than Crawford's power. In the fifth round, Postol fell to a knee, then touched the canvas with a glove. After that, it was only a matter time before the judges would make the rout official – 118-107 on two cards and 117-108 on the third.

COMING UP

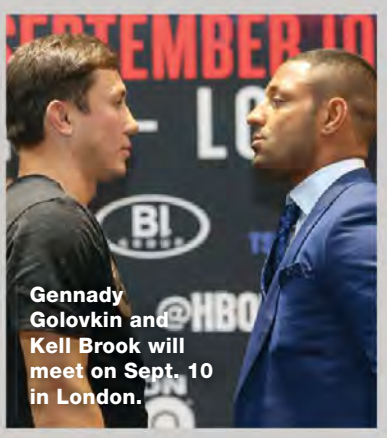
AUGUST

AUG. 19 – Jarrell Miller vs. Fred Kassi, heavyweights, Rochester, N.Y. (Showtime).
AUG. 19 – Ivan Delgado vs. Alejandro Ochoa, junior lightweights, Los Angeles (Estrella TV).
AUG. 20 – Riku Kano (No. 9) vs. Katsunari Takayama (No. 6), strawweights (for the vacant WBO strawweight title), Sanda, Japan.
AUG. 21 – Errol Spence (No. 7) vs. Leonard Bundu, welterweights, New York (NBC).
AUG. 23 – Caleb Plant vs. Jonathan Cepeda, super middleweights, Bethlehem, Pa. (Fox Sports 1).
AUG. 27 – Robert Guerrero vs. David Peraltz, welterweights, Anaheim, Calif. (Spike).
AUG. 27 – Miguel Marriaga vs. Guy Robb, featherweights, Fallon, Nev. (UniMas).
AUG. 31 – Kohei Kono (No. 5) vs. Luis Concepcion (No. 6), junior bantamweights (for Kono's WBA title), Tokyo. Also, Ryoichi Taguchi vs. Ryo Miyazaki, junior flyweights (for Taguchi's WBA title).

SEPTEMBER

GENNADY GOLOVKIN VS. KELL BROOK

Date: Sept. 10
Location: O2 Arena, London
Division: Middleweights (for Golovkin's IBF, WBA and WBC titles)
RING Ratings: Golovkin, No. 1 and No. 3 P4P; Brook, No. 1 welterweight
TV: HBO



Gennady Golovkin and Kell Brook will meet on Sept. 10 in London.

Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Lee Haskins (No. 6) vs. Stuart Hall, bantamweights (for Haskins' IBF title); Johnriel Casimero (No. 4) vs. Charlie Edwards, flyweights (for Casimero's IBF title).
Significance: Golovkin (35-0, 32 KOs) made an interesting choice in lieu of a showdown with Canelo Alvarez. Kell Brook (36-0, 25 KOs) is the smaller fighter but a big welterweight with an outstanding skill set and experience. Plus, the challenger will be fighting at home. Most experts expect GGG to score a knockout but the fight could be intriguing before it happens.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Golovkin KO 8; Fischer – Golovkin KO 10; Harty – Golovkin KO 5; Abramson – Golovkin KO 6

LIAM SMITH VS. CANELO ALVAREZ

Date: Sept. 17
Location: MGM Grand, Las Vegas

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Division: Junior middleweights (for Smith's WBO title)
RING Ratings: Smith, No. 8; Alvarez, middleweight champion and No. 8 P4P
TV: HBO Pay-Per-View
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Luis Ortiz (No. 4) vs. Alexander Ustinov, heavyweights.
Significance: Alvarez (47-1-1, 33 KOs) will be fighting under the 154-pound limit for the first time since 2013. He is coming off a sensational sixth-round knockout of Amir Khan in May. Smith (23-0-1, 13 KOs) is a sturdy, well-schooled 154-pounder who will be as prepared as possible. The problem for him is that he hasn't faced an elite opponent and has no special skills.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Alvarez KO 10; Fischer – Alvarez UD; Harty – Alvarez KO 9; Abramson – Alvarez KO 8

ANTHONY CROLLA VS. JORGE LINARES

Date: Sept. 24
Location: Manchester, England
Division: Lightweights (for the vacant RING and Crolla's WBA title)
RING Ratings: Linares, No. 1; Crolla, No. 3
TV: Sky Sports
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Issac Lowe vs. Tshifhiwa Munyai, featherweights; Hosea Burton vs. Frank Buglioni, light heavyweights.
Significance: Crolla (31-4-3, 13 KOs) is one of the better stories in boxing, having recovered from injuries suffered while foiling a burglary to win a world title. This fight will be his greatest test. Linares (40-3, 27 KOs) is an excellent, athletic boxer with some power. He was supposed to fight Dejan Zlaticanin this past spring but pulled out because of a broken right hand.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Linares UD; Fischer – Crolla MD; Harty – Linares SD; Abramson – Linares UD

SEPT. 9 – Hanzel Martinez vs. Emmanuel Quartey, junior featherweights, Las Vegas (CBS Sports Net).

SEPT. 9 – Eduard Troyanovsky (No. 6) vs. Keita Obara, junior welterweights (for Troyanovsky's IBF title), Moscow.

SEPT. 10 – Andy Ruiz (No. 10) vs. Franklin Lawrence, heavyweights, Lemoore, Calif. (UniMas).

SEPT. 10 – Carlos Cuadras (No. 2) vs. Roman Gonzalez (flyweight champion, No. 1 P4P), junior bantamweights (for Cuadras' WBC title), Inglewood, Calif. (HBO).

SEPT. 16 – Shinsuke Yamanaka (No. 1, No. 9 P4P) vs. Anselmo Moreno (No. 2), bantamweights (for the vacant RING and Yamanaka's WBC title), Osaka, Japan. Also, Hugo Ruiz (No. 9) vs. Hozumi Hasegawa, junior featherweights (for Ruiz's WBC title).

SEPT. 17 – Krzysztof Glowacki (No. 3) vs. Oleksandr Usyk (No. 7), cruiserweights (for Glowacki's WBO title), Gdansk, Poland.

SEPT. 24 – Donnie Nietes (C) vs. TBA, flyweights, Carson, Calif.

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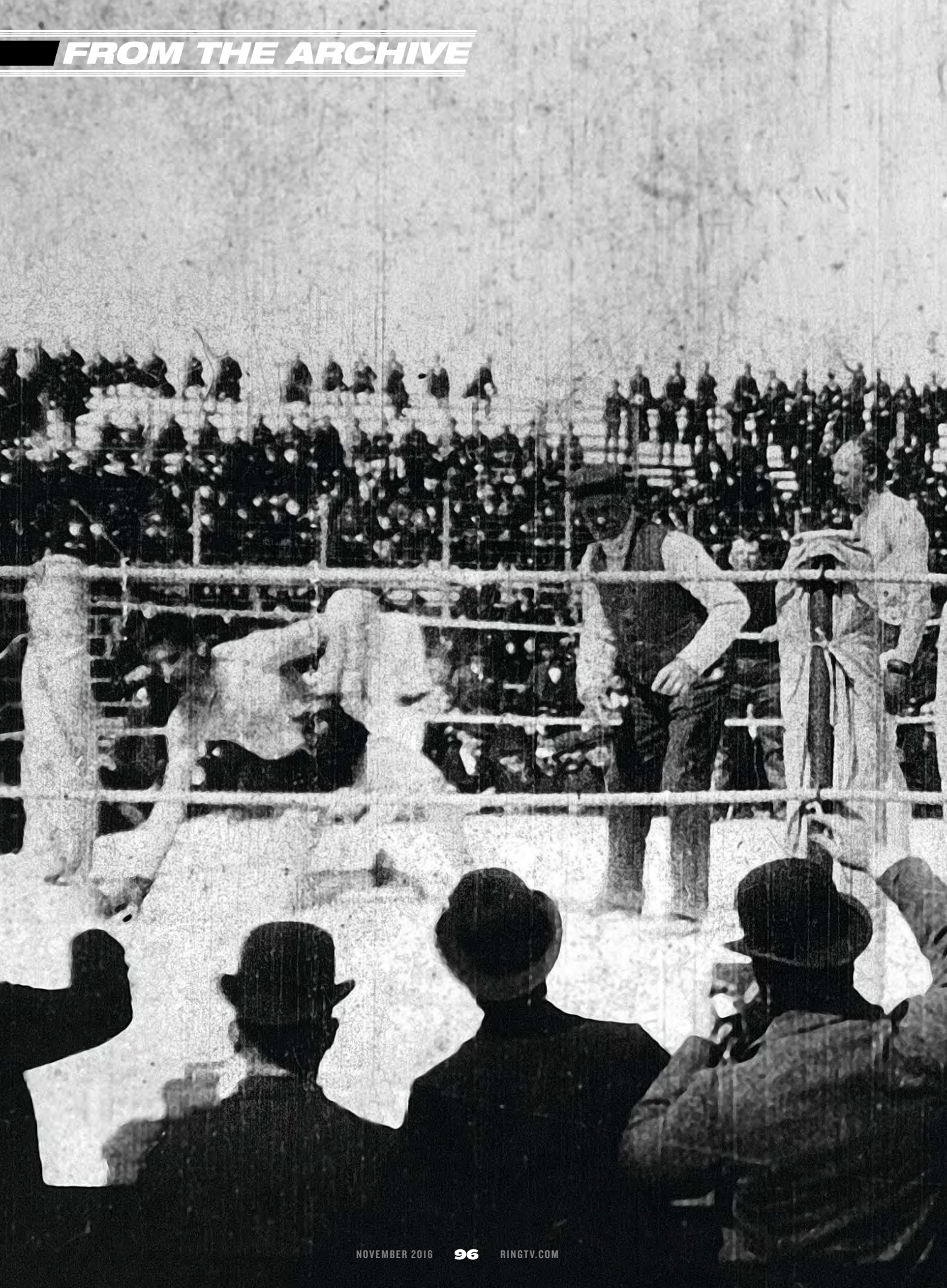
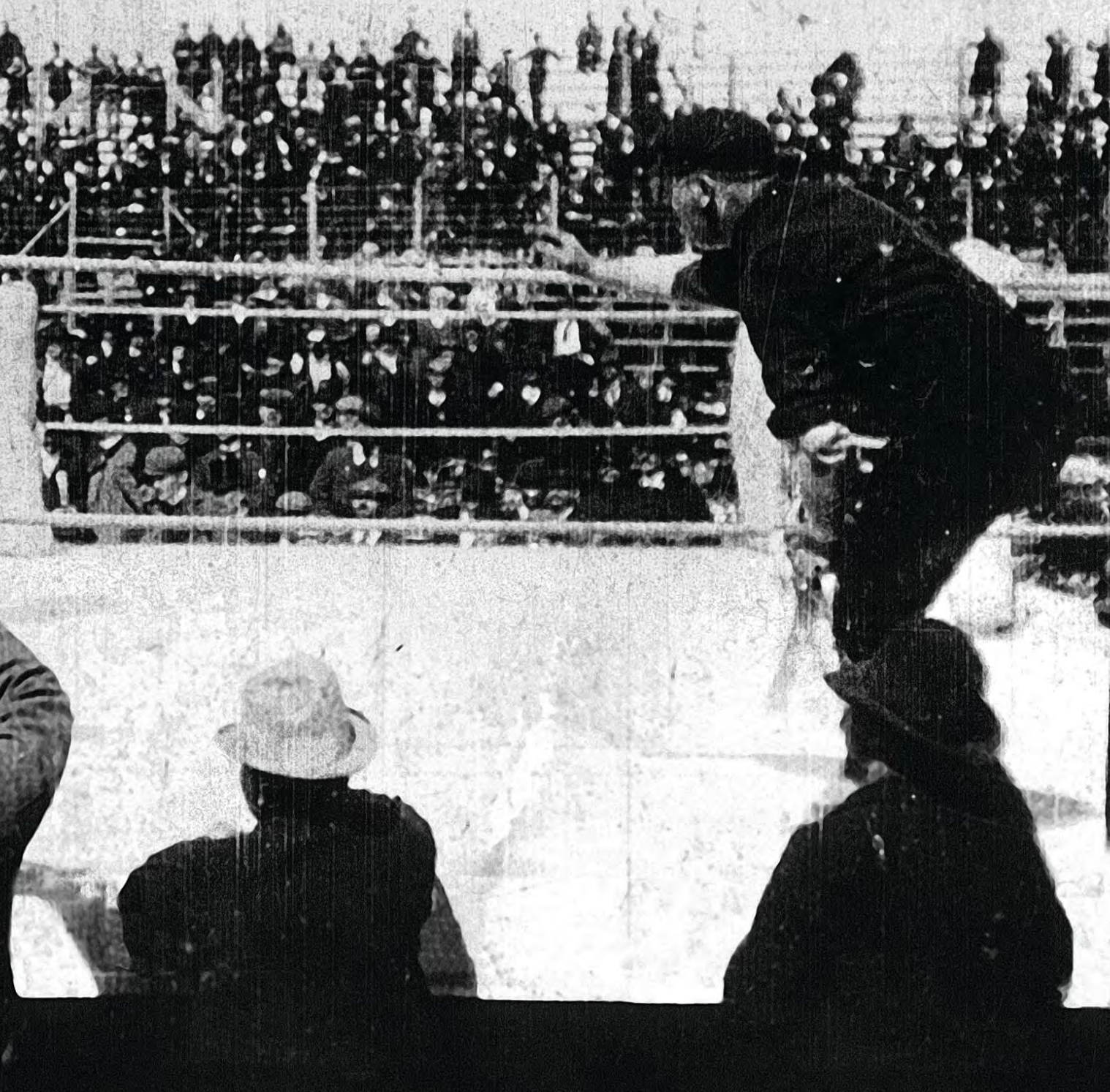


EARLY UPSET

This classic photo captures a key moment in one of the first big upsets in the history of modern boxing. James J. Corbett had pulled off his own surprise when he knocked out the legendary John L. Sullivan to win the heavyweight championship in 1892. Five years later he accepted a title defense against former middleweight titleholder Bob Fitzsimmons. "Ruby Robert," a Welshman who grew up in New Zealand, was odd-looking. He was bald, covered in freckles and had wide, powerful shoulders (the product of his work as a blacksmith) to go with long skinny legs. But he could crack. He demonstrated that against the favored and bigger Corbett on March 17, 1897 in Carson City, Nevada. Corbett, an early devotee of scientific boxing, had dished out considerable punishment throughout a one-sided fight when, in a historic instant, a wild punch from Fitzsimmons caught Corbett in the stomach. Corbett took a knee and clutched his midsection (see photo), as he was unable to breathe. And, alas, he couldn't get up. A new champion was crowned. RING



#ATTHEFIGHTS

By **Lamar Clark**

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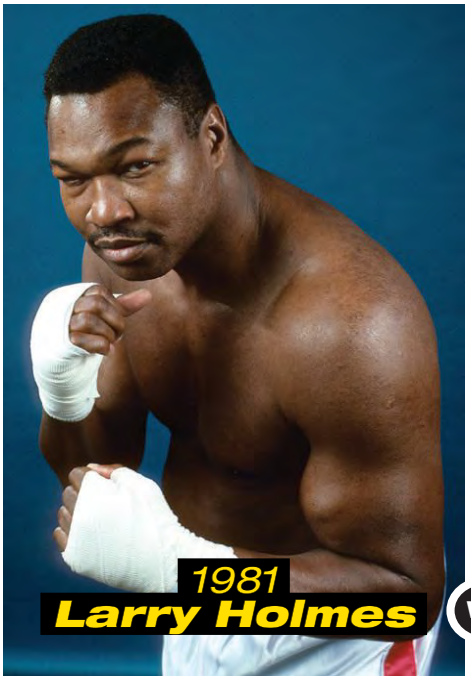

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VS.

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ORTHODOX	**STANCE**	ORTHODOX
69-6 (44 KOs)	**CAREER RECORD**	37-0 (36 KOs)
59 PERCENT	**KO RATE**	97 PERCENT
81 INCHES	**REACH**	83 INCHES

STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

Boxing promoter Don King (top right) posed with presidential candidate Donald Trump during the Republican National Convention in July at the Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland. Former four-division titleholder Miguel Cotto (above) attended the 2016 Roc Nation Summer Classic Charity Basketball Tournament on July 21 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

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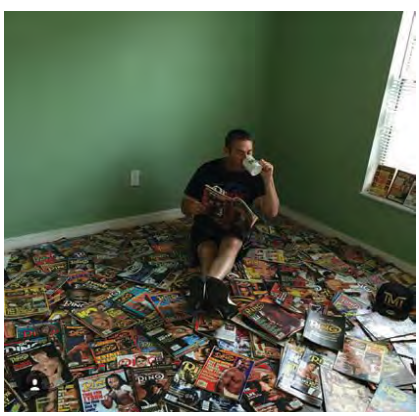

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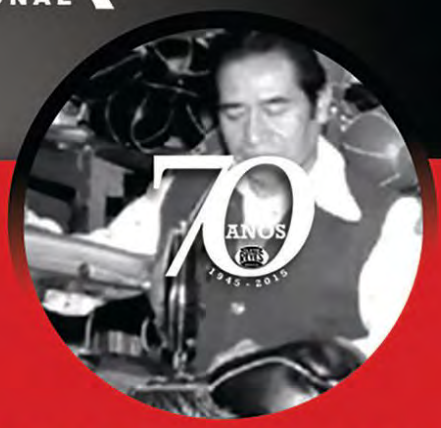

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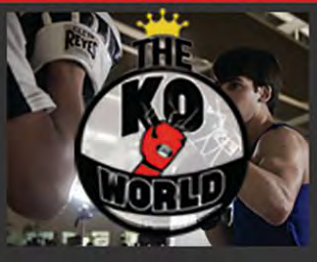

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